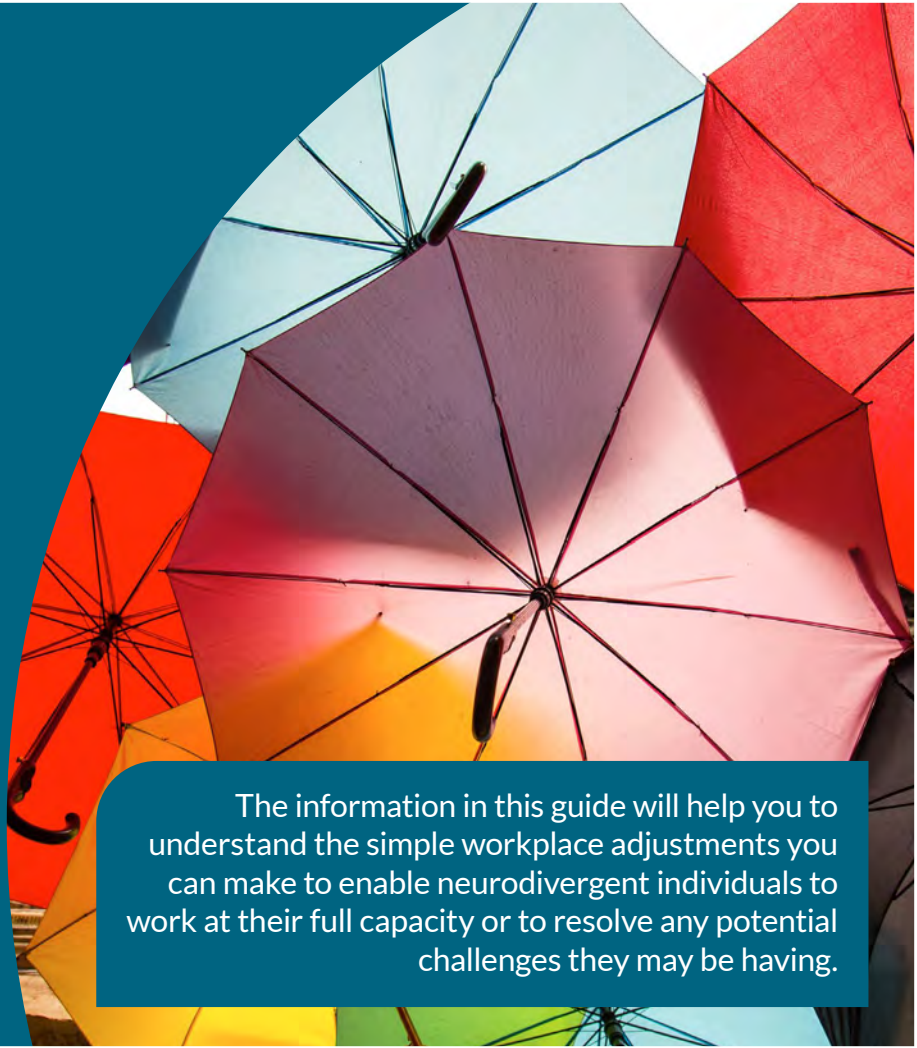
NEURODIVERSITY TOOLKIT

Line Manager's Guide



The information in this guide will help you to understand the simple workplace adjustments you can make to enable neurodivergent individuals to work at their full capacity or to resolve any potential challenges they may be having.

MEDIGOLD HEALTH

Contents

Introduction

Aims	4
How to use it	5

Line Manager's guide	**6**
Concentration and focus	8
Organisation & time management	12
Processing and memory	16
Visual processing	20
Auditory processing	24
Reading	28
Writing	30
Numbers / mathematics	32
Communication and social interaction	34
Impulsivity and hyperactivity	38
Routine, structure and change	40
Movement and co-ordination	42
Sensory sensitivity	44
Confidence, self-esteem & emotional issues	46

Dealing with workplace situations	**48**
Recruitment	50
Interviewing	52
Inductions	54
Training and development	58
Giving feedback	62
Reviews and appraisals	66
Performance management	68
Continuous professional development and promotion	74
Dealing with change	76

Introduction

Aims of the Neurodiversity Toolkit

The Neurodiversity Toolkit as a whole is designed to provide information to enable neurodivergent individuals to work to their full potential for the benefit of the whole organisation. The tips, advice and suggested workplace adjustments can also be used by individuals and their managers to help resolve challenges at work that result from neurological differences.

How to use the Line Manager's Guide

The information in this guide will help you to understand the simple workplace adjustments you can make to enable neurodivergent individuals to work at their full capacity or to resolve any potential challenges they may be having.

In the Introduction we highlighted the benefits of developing your understanding of neurodiversity including:

"A neuro-diverse workforce can lead to innovation and progress in the business world"

"...different ways of thinking can be invaluable in completing tasks and solving problems"

"Neurodiversity is the greatest untapped resource on earth"

If you use this guide in a positive and proactive way you will benefit the individual, the team and the organisation as a whole. By making small adjustments not only can you increase productivity and results but also create an open and supportive work culture. This can reduce absence and help you to attract and keep talent.

As a Line Manager, you could use this in two main ways:

1. To get a broad understanding to guide your practice
2. To find specific advice for individuals in your team

It is very important to note that the difficulties listed are those that could be experienced by neurodivergent individuals. Therefore it should not be assumed that an individual will experience any or all of these. Many neurodivergent individuals have developed their own self-management strategies. It is important to have an open and honest conversation about any issues they may be having (which of course may be temporary and easily resolved with reference to this guide). You should always discuss and agree any adjustments with the individual before implementing.

Line Manager's guide

Concentration and focus

Wandering attention. Easily distracted
Struggling with interruptions and distractions

- From your observations what is their best working environment and when is their concentration at its best. Try to arrange for this to be replicated whenever possible.
- Provide access to a quiet private space if you can. Particularly for detailed work, important tasks or when you notice their concentration is especially poor.
- Set up small temporary partitions, files or folders to make their workspace separate from others.
- Provide a workspace free from posters, pictures or bright colours if possible. Or cover or remove posters or pictures if possible.
- Noise minimizing headphones or listening to music to block out noise distractions
- If possible, plan or reallocate work to enable them to focus on one task at a time
- Allow them to use a “Do not disturb” type sign, to turn off their phone and/or use an “Out of office” message to help them to avoid interruptions (possibly for set times each day or discussed with the team when they need to use it).
- Work with them to find the best way to get back on track after a distraction. Examples include getting up and walking around. A colleague could support with this

Overlooking details - leading to errors or incomplete work
Struggling to listen during conversations, training or instructions
Sometimes zoning out

- Break down information to be given into bite-size chunks
- Offer training sessions and meetings in other ways e.g. shorter sessions or using different methods e.g. video, demonstration
- You may need to arrange extra support for them in training
- Advise them to take advantage of the different types of training available such as computer-based and classroom-based
- Arrange for 1-1 meetings to take place after training to recap and check understanding.
- Suggest they take notes in meetings and training sessions to help keep focused
- Follow up any meetings with an email highlighting key points
- Suggest all colleagues give messages / requests in writing and verbally
- Remind them to have a notepad always available to write down details
- Buddy them up with a colleague in training or meetings to keep them focused E.g. give a nudge if they seem to zone out

Struggling to stay focused on and complete mundane tasks
Flitting from one activity to another

- Make mundane tasks more interesting if possible. Use visuals or colour
- Find different ways for these tasks can be completed. Some tasks could be reallocated or shared out
- Planning their work day to help with focus E.g.
  - » Start the day with a fun and interesting task to spark motivation and concentration (this would need to be within a set time so they move on to other tasks)
  - » Arrange an interesting task for the end of a day or end of a piece of work as a reward
  - » Plan to alternate mundane and interesting tasks throughout the day/week
- Someone may need to check in with them or prompt them
- Checklist or planner with timings may be needed to keep them on track

Overly absorbed in interesting tasks
Losing track of time and/or neglecting other tasks

- Suggest the use of calendar or email alerts to mark when tasks should end
- You or a colleague may need to keep them on track

General tips and techniques

- Suggest or enable
- Doing something physical help keep attention focused e.g. doodling or stress ball
- Work standing up or walking around to boost attention
- Breaks between tasks to clear the mind before starting the next one
- Arranging the working day to take regular breaks. E.g. shorter lunch hour = extra breaks
- Physical exercise and/or fresh air regularly throughout the week

Organisation and time management

Difficulty keeping track of multiple tasks or multi-tasking
Forgetting place in a task sequence
Trouble starting and finishing tasks
Struggling to plan and prioritise work

- Suggest / enable them to incorporate planning and organisation time at the start and end of every day
- Find someone to help them with planning, prioritising and setting deadlines
- Suggest they make a list of priorities for the day– adding to these or re-juggling if needed
- Break down tasks given to them into smaller steps
- Suggest they create a checklist of tasks with timings
- Visual planner of work tasks may help
- Suggest the use of calendar or email tools e.g. alerts
- Make an agreement that they should only take on work after checking their work planner rather than automatically agreeing to requests
- Suggest they plan to check their inbox at regular intervals rather than responding immediately to every email. Colleagues may need to be made aware of this
- Adjust their work hours so they have time when fewer colleagues are at work
- Plan or reallocate work so they can focus on just a single a task at a time
- Enable them to use a “Do not disturb” type sign, turn off their phone and/or use an “Out of office” message to help to avoid interruptions. This could this be arranged for set times each day or discussed with their team when it is needed

Disorganised, messy or cluttered workspace
Frequently losing or misplacing things

- Suggest they make their work space better organised and less cluttered E.g.
  - » Folders, filing systems, in/out trays, desk tidy
  - » Colour coding and labelling
- Suggest / enable setting 15 minutes aside to clear and tidy workspace every day
- Items that are used together to be stored near to each other

Persistent lateness
Forgetting appointments, meeting or deadlines
Mixing up arrangements or getting meeting times and days wrong

- Encourage them to keep track of appointments and deadlines
  - » E.g. Diary or calendar – written or on computer
  - » E.g. Planners and checklists
  - » E.g. Email or calendar alerts
- Suggest they consider planning to arrive 15-30 minutes early

Missing deadlines and targets
Tendency to underestimate how long things take
Putting things off and procrastinating
Ending up behind schedule

- Break down larger projects into smaller tasks with individual deadlines
- Setting interim deadlines or an earlier deadline than is actually required
- Suggest they plan tasks to fit in a specific time slot E.g. top 3 things to do before lunch
- Suggest use of email and calendar alerts
- Ask them how they can be better prepared for the next work day
- Help them to create a “hot spot” for tasks which need to be completed in next 24 hrs.
- Make colleagues aware that extra time might be needed for some tasks (with their agreement)
- Help them with prioritising tasks and setting deadlines. Buddy them up with someone in your team who is good at this
- You or a colleague agree a work schedule with timings with them on a regular basis
- Provide a coach, mentor or buddy
- Suggest setting of alarms and alerts for each small task
- Suggest they use a specific planner or checklist with timings
- Suggest they keep a daily log of what they do to identify where the time goes
- Suggest they block time in their calendar for specific tasks if the day starts filling up with meetings
- Arrange regular 1-2-1 meetings to review tasks and projects etc.

Processing and memory

Finding it hard to recall recent information and events
Taking longer to learn things than most people
Tendency to forget what is learnt more easily than others seem to
Finding it hard to learn in "normal" way – e.g. formal training
Difficulty remembering and understanding verbal instructions

- Suggest they have a notepad always available to write down details or important information
- Provide examples / templates to guide them at the start of a piece of work
- Handouts given out in advance of training. Briefing papers given out in advance of meetings
- Suggest managers/ colleagues/ trainers regularly check understanding
- Give information in bite-size chunks
- Advise them to take advantage of the different types of training available such as computer-based and classroom-based
- Adapt your training sessions and meetings e.g. shorter sessions or using different methods e.g. video, demonstration
- Extra support for them in training may need to be arranged
- Make sure a 1-1 meeting takes place after training to recap and check understanding
- Suggest taking notes in meetings and training sessions to help them to retain the information
- Send follow up emails after any meeting highlighting any key points
- Ask colleagues to give messages and requests in writing as well as verbally

Finding it hard to see the bigger picture rather than the detail
Struggling to string a chain of thoughts together
Difficulty following sequences and instructions
Trouble understanding a task and planning the steps needed to complete it
Finding it hard to apply rules to different situations

- Set aside time for them to ask questions and get clarification
- Provide an explanation of the wider context for decisions, projects and tasks
- Mind-mapping might help them organise your thinking before starting a project
- Use flow charts, illustrations and diagrams help them to understand concepts and how things fit together
- You or colleague could take time to discuss concepts
- Make your task setting as clear as possible
- Check in with them to make sure they know what is expected and what success looks like.

Needing extra processing or thinking time
Needing extra time to respond to questions
Struggling with Interruptions / distractions
Trouble interpreting information from different senses and sources
Finding it hard to change or adapt part way through a task

- Suggest / enable them to plan their work so they can focus on just a single a task at a time and/ or arrange their work so they finish one task before starting another
- Make colleagues, managers or trainers aware that they may need extra time to answer (only with their consent)
- Enable them to use a "Do not disturb" type sign, turn off their phone and/or use an "Out of office" message to help to avoid interruptions. This could this be arranged for set times each day or discussed with their team when it is needed
- Provide access to a quiet private space if possible. Particularly for detailed work, important tasks or when you notice their concentration is especially poor.
- Set up small temporary partitions, files or folders to make their workspace separate from others.
- If possible, provide a workspace free from posters, pictures or bright colours, or cover or remove posters or pictures
- Noise minimizing headphones or listening to music to block out noise distractions

Visual processing

Reading slowly or hesitantly making many small mistakes
Difficulty keeping track when reading or finding a something specific on a page
Skipping words or entire lines when reading, or reading the same sentence twice
Mixing up letters, the sequence of letters or omit letters when reading or writing
Slow at writing and do you struggle to copy text
Finding it hard to write within the lines or margins

- Arrange for information to be given in different ways to avoid a lot of reading e.g. verbally
- Recommend the inclusion of flow charts, diagrams and pictures to help understanding
- Key points be highlighted (bold) or could summaries of longer documents be given
- Allow time to read information and instructions
- Arrange for someone to check they have understood the material correctly
- Arrange so they are not asked to read out in front of a meeting
- Assistive technology may be needed – Access to Work could be used to fund this
- Arrange for assistance with any hand-written work such as a proof reader
- Provide a dictionary, spell checker or glossary available if needed

Difficulty recalling what they've seen or read
Finding it hard to concentrate on visual tasks, videos or slide shows
Missing changes in displays, signs or posted notices

- Arrange for handouts / briefing papers to be given in advance of training or meetings
- Ensure information is given in bite-size chunks
- Adapt your training sessions and meetings e.g. shorter sessions or using different methods e.g. video, demonstration
- Advise them to take advantage of the different types of training available such as computer-based and classroom-based
- Suggest / enable a 1-1 meeting after training to recap and check understanding
- Suggest they take notes in meetings and training sessions help them retain the information
- Suggest colleagues send a follow up email after any meeting with key points highlighted
- Ask colleagues to give messages and requests in writing as well as verbally

Difficulty judging distances or where objects are in space
Trouble map reading and navigating
Clumsy and bumping into things
Poor hand-eye coordination poor

- Remind to keep space around their chair / desk clear
- Extra vigilance for trip hazards
- Suggest they keep workspace clutter free? E.g. in-tray, filing system, desk tidy.
- Suggest they avoid food and drinks at their desk
- Provide equipment such as trays or trolleys help them with carrying items
- Guided tour of the workplace when empty help them to get used to new environments or changes to the environment
- Ensure they get clear directions and maps for any journeys you need to make for work
- Someone to accompany them on first visits
- Suggest use of navigation software for journeys to other offices / sites
- Offer a map of large buildings with routes marked
- Make sure cupboard doors are shut

Finding that words distort, blur or move when reading
Easily tired when reading or needing to take frequent breaks
Finding white paper / high contrast difficult
Tending to squint, rubs your eyes, blink a lot or become wide-eyed
Sensitive to bright light and get glare from bright objects / patterns
Headaches, nausea or eye strain

- Workspace in suitable lighting if possible
- Additional or adjustable lighting
- Change the background colour or use an anti-glare filter on computer screens
- Suggest / enable them to take frequent breaks from computer work or reading
- Documents can be printed on coloured or off-white paper if available
- A coloured overlay or coloured reading ruler might help
- Ask that colleagues use large print and good spacing in documents*

* **Also see suggestions for Reading and Writing difficulties**

Auditory processing

Struggling to hear speech clearly against a background of noise
Difficulty hearing poor quality sounds (e.g. mobile phone or in an “echoey” room).
Finding it hard to pick out one voice from others or identify where a sound is coming from
Trouble hearing speakers clearly from a distance
Struggling to listen selectively to one side or the other
Finding it hard to distinguish similar sounds from one another – such as “70” and “17”

Suggest and remind them to use the following self-help tips

- Focus on the person speaking to you if you are in a crowded room
- Give them your full attention and concentrate on key words
- Observe gestures and facial movements very closely
- Position yourself directly in front of the person speaking to you
- Position yourself so that you are away from any source of any noise
- Try to arrive early for meetings / training sessions so you can position yourself close to the chair / speaker / trainer
- On the telephone hold the receiver as close to your ear as possible - it should be tight enough so that it covers the ear and keeps out other sounds

Consider acoustics for meetings or training E.g.

- Rooms with carpets, soft furnishings are better
- Away from sources of noise
- Minimise background noise.
- Switch off air con, shut doors and windows,
- Ask colleagues to keep noise to a minimum
- Sit them near chair of meeting or the trainer if in training courses

Suggest the following for their colleagues

- Get their attention before starting talking
- Face them and not cover their mouths when speaking
- Speak clearly and a little slowly
- Avoid complex grammar and vocabulary
- Allow you time for processing the information - only rephrasing or explaining information in a different way when you need it
  - » Emphasise key points when speaking or changes of topic in training
  - » Supply notes and slides in advance of any training

Difficulty following spoken, multiple step instructions
Struggling to understand information told verbally
Finding it hard to remember instructions or messages given verbally

- Others to write down information that is extremely important such as directions, telephone numbers or schedules
- Break down information into small, manageable chunks
- Ask that briefing notes / handouts are given in advance of meetings / training
- Suggest others such as colleagues/ trainers to regularly check understanding
- Adapt your training sessions and meetings e.g. shorter sessions or using different methods e.g. video, demonstration
- Advise them to take advantage of the different types of training available such as computer-based and classroom-based
- Arrange a 1-1 meeting after training to recap and check your understanding
- Suggest they take notes in meetings and training sessions help them retain the information
- Ask that colleagues send follow up emails after any meeting with key points highlighted
- Ask colleagues to give messages and requests in writing as well as verbally
- Be clear in what you say – use literal language

Reading

Reading slowly and not very fluently
Difficulty with new words
Misreading or misunderstanding words
Difficulty with pronunciation

- Make colleagues aware (with staff member's consent) so they're not asked to read out loud or they know to give extra time to digest written material
- Speak to trainers so they're not asked to read out loud in front of a group
- Supply written material in advance of meetings and training
- Arrange for instructions / information to be given in different ways to avoid a lot of reading e.g. verbally, audio/video, written lists, demonstration
- Highlight key points in documents (bold) or give summaries of longer documents. Include flow charts, diagrams and pictures.
- Suggest / enable them to allow plenty of time to read information and instructions
- Suggest they check with someone that they have understood the material correctly
- Assistive technology could help e.g. Text to speech software, reading pen

Visual sensitivity to text
Words appearing to move or blur on the page

- An anti-glare filter on computer screens may help
- Suggest they change the background text and colour on computers
- Find out if coloured or off-white paper can be made available
- A coloured overlay help or coloured reading ruler could help

- Ask that colleagues follow these simple guidelines for documents
  - » Offer coloured paper if available
  - » Use dark coloured text on a light (not white) background
  - » Avoid red and green text and white text on black
  - » Use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Verdana
  - » Font size should be 12-14
  - » Avoid capitals underline and italics –emphasise something in bold
  - » Make your test left-justified and full width
  - » Line-spacing of 1.5 is preferable
  - » Use bullet points and numbering rather than continuous text
  - » Use short, simple sentences in a direct style. Be concise
  - » Give instructions clearly. Avoid long sentences of explanation
  - » Lists of 'do's and 'don'ts' are more useful than continuous text
  - » Use active rather than passive voice and avoid double negatives
  - » Flow charts. pictograms and graphics help
  - » Avoid abbreviations and jargon
  - » Animated PowerPoint presentations can be difficult

Writing

Trouble structuring written work
Finding it difficult to express ideas in writing

- Provide templates forms and examples help them to understand what is expected in written work
- Explore other ways for information to be passed on / alternatives to written reports such as verbal reports
- Assistive technology could help
- A colleague could help them to get ideas down in writing
- Suggest / enable them to break writing tasks into stages e.g. brainstorming, drafting, editing, and proofreading, final draft
- Provide feedback so they know what they have done well

Making spelling and grammar errors
Difficulty with hand writing / writing slowly
Others finding it hard to read their writing
Reversing letters or numbers
Finding copying hard

- Explore other ways for them to pass on information e.g. verbally or email
- Arrange for them to avoid specific tasks that involve writing especially in front of a group
- Arrange assistance with any hand-written work such as a proof reader
- Suggest / provide a dictionary, spell checker or glossary
- Assistive technology could help
- Ask trainers for them not to be asked to write on a board/flip chart in training
- Make colleagues to be aware of this difficulty (with consent from the staff member) to avoid embarrassing situations
- Arrange that presentations or video replace written reports
- Extend deadlines for completion of written work
- Extra time be scheduled specifically in their working week for written work
- Help them break down and set interim deadlines for assignments or reports
- Arrange that handouts are given in advance of training with gaps for short notes
- Ask for a photocopy of a colleague's notes from meetings or training to be given
- Discuss adjustments for tests or assessments
- Provide lined paper

Physical difficulty with writing

- Pen grip
- Writing slope - to enable writing at a slight angle (incline)
- Do you need to refer them on to see if they can access additional help to develop the mechanics of handwriting?
- A coach, mentor or buddy could assist with hand written tasks if there is no alternative

Numbers / mathematics

Struggling with mathematical and data tasks

- Provide a hand-held calculator or investigate speaking calculator software
- Arrange for additional time to complete mathematics tasks
- Provide figures in writing before a meeting or training session
- Arrange for a 1-1 meeting afterwards to review the material just presented
- Ask that only essential data is presented and all unnecessary words or figures are removed
- Supply a written copy of figures
- Suggest colleagues use pie charts, graphs and diagrams to illustrate figures
- Suggest they write calculation steps down and talk them through with you if needed
- Remind them to use scrap paper for rough working

Difficulty with writing, reading and remembering numbers

- Suggest they make use of permitted methods to help to remember codes and passwords
- Arrange for speed dialling of telephone numbers to be set up
- Supply examples and templates of forms involving numbers
- Some people who have difficulties with numbers also struggle with organisation and time management so please refer to that section for additional suggestions

Communication and social interaction

Tendency to interpret words literally
Not understanding humour and sarcasm
Struggling to work out what others are thinking from body language
Finding it difficult to make appropriate eye contact
Finding it hard to pick up on unwritten rules and social cues

- Work colleagues could be made aware of their difficulties (with staff member's consent), particularly their literal understanding, difficulty with jokes and sarcasm and / or eye contact
- Suggest colleagues avoided jargon, turns of phrase or words with double meanings in written work. Create a glossary of terms to refer to if needed
- Someone to identify and explain the unwritten rules or etiquette of the workplace and/or sort out misunderstandings
- Be aware that eye contact may be very difficult (and may actually make them feel physically ill)

Finding it hard to make conversation and small talk
Struggling to start and end a conversation
Choosing inappropriate topics of conversation
Difficulty changing topics or tend to get stuck on a topic

- What information should you share with colleagues (with staff member's consent). An awareness session may help avoid misunderstandings
- Agree "safe" topics of conversation at work to avoid inappropriate conversations
- Help them learn what is the appropriate way to conduct yourself in a meeting
- Someone to let them know if you are acting inappropriately
- Suggest / enable them to have some additional preparation time and support for any work reviews or appraisals or indeed any formal meetings with you
- Think about how you will deal with comments from, or concerns raised by colleagues. Discuss and agree with your staff member what you can disclose
- Be aware if they seem to be struggling more than normal and approach sensitively

Struggling in groups / team activities
Difficulty making conversation or answering questions quickly
Finding it hard to make friendships and often alone during breaks

- Make colleagues / trainers aware (with staff member's consent) of any worries about social or group situations
- Ensure the aims and objectives of meetings and training sessions are made clear in advance or at least at the very beginning. Supply an agenda or lesson plan
- Suggest people recap and summarise regularly especially at the end of a particular topic as well as check understanding regularly
- Advise colleagues to allow them to take time to process questions and give answers, as well suggest they don't rephrase or repeat
- Ensure information is given in bite size chunks and suggest that others allow thinking time
- Request that colleagues avoid using acronyms, metaphors, jargon, complex language or phrases open to misinterpretation
- Ensure any verbal instructions to be backed up with written note or email
- Arrange for someone to help them integrate into a team to avoid isolation
- Suggest social groups they could join to help build up their social network
- Think about how you can support them to socialise more with colleagues
- Suggest they attend a quiet part at the start of a team social event, rather than the whole event
- Encourage colleagues to respect their decision not to socialise

Impulsivity and hyperactivity

Interrupting or talking over other people
Blurting out something rude or inappropriate
Impatient and struggling waiting for their turn
Giving answers before the question has finished
Acting without thinking about the consequences
Struggling to behave appropriately

- Suggest they write down ideas, suggestion or comments when they think of them rather than blurting them out. These can be passed on when it's more appropriate.
- Sit down with them to agree what is appropriate workplace behaviour
- Agree how inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with E.g. sensitively, in private
- Making colleagues aware of this difficulty and how to handle it could help (with consent)
- Having a workplace mentor or buddy who can advise and guide them in appropriate workplace behaviour

Perpetually "on the go", restless or agitated
Constantly fidgeting and do they have difficulty sitting still
Tendency to try to do everything at once
Talking excessively
Easily bored and do you crave excitement

- Suggest / enable them to move around at work E.g.
  - » Stand up
  - » Doodle, Use a stress ball or fidget toy
  - » Take notes while talking on the phone
  - » Stand up and work
  - » Walking to talk to colleagues instead of emailing or calling
  - » Walking meetings

- Suggest / enable them to do some physical activity during meetings
- Suggest / enable them to take a break every hour or so for some physical exercise or movement
- Suggest they take a walk or get some fresh air during the day (lunch hour)
- Suggest they plan regular vigorous exercise into their week
- Make colleagues aware of this issue (with consent from the staff member) - they could prompt if needed e.g. suggest they slow down if rushing Tendency to rush tasks

Not taking time to fully consider the method, process or instructions

- Suggest or support them to create a plan of work including the method or process and then double check this with a colleague or yourself
- Help them break down larger projects into smaller tasks with individual deadlines
- Suggest they plan tasks to fit in a specific time slot E.g. top 3 things to do before lunch
- Suggest setting alerts for each small task or use a specific planner or checklist with timings

Routine, structure and change

Struggling with activities outside of normal routine?
Finding it difficult to imagine what could happen if..?
Appearing to find it hard to change the method they are using part way through a task?

- Suggest / enable them to create a work routine for the regular tasks they need to complete
- Help make the structure of their workday to be very clear E.g. expected output and timings
- Suggest / enable them to give each separate activity a clear start, middle and end
- Suggest / enable them to incorporate planning and organisation time at the start and end of every day
- Suggest they make a list of priorities for the day– adding to these or re-juggling if needed
- Suggest they break down tasks into smaller steps e.g. a checklist – with timings
- A visual planner of work tasks might help
- Arrange it so they can focus on just a single a task at a time
- Arrange for meetings to be scheduled at regular times or at the best time for them where possible

Finding it hard to prepare for change and plan for the future
Difficulty coping in new or unfamiliar situations
Finding it hard to cope with change and / or fear of trying new things

- Plan to limit or mitigate the effects of change whenever possible E.g.
  - Have regular break times,
  - Avoid cancelling or changing meetings unless you really have to,
  - Keep regular activities to the same times and days,
  - Carefully consider changes of management or teams or work location

- Try where possible to identify well in advance any potential changes or new activities so they can prepare their response to them
- Provide information about a new situation to help them feel more comfortable
- Introduce changes or new activities gradually
- Give full explanations of decisions or changes
- Provide opportunities for them to have their questions answered
- Provide additional support to help them adapt to new situations or working practices
- Arrange shadowing, training and mentoring for new duties
- Ensure agendas and briefing papers for meetings; or lesson plan or handouts for training are provided in advance when possible

Movement and co-ordination

Struggling with the mechanical elements of writing
Difficult to use a keyboard or mouse

- Suggest / enable them to use different way to do tasks involving writing e.g. typing or giving them verbally
- Assistive technology could help E.g.
  - » Dictaphone
  - » Voice recognition software
  - » Pen grips
  - » Ergonomic keyboard
  - » Vertical mouse
  - » Changes to setting such as sticky keys

Difficulty using equipment and machinery

- Additional training needed for the physical or practical tasks
- These tasks be reallocated or shared amongst the team
- Equipment may need to be adapted E.g. larger levers, extra grips

Struggling with personal presentation and formal dressing

- Arrange for someone to offer advice sensitively
- Suggest they create an email or calendar alert to check their appearance

Clumsy or a tendency to trip or fall and drop things

- Suggest they keep space around their chair / desk clear
- Suggest / enable them to keep their workspace clutter free E.g. in-tray, filing system, desk tidy
- Suggest they avoid discourage food and drinks at desks
- Discuss equipment such as trays or trolleys to help with carrying items
- Plan time for a guided tour of the workplace when empty help them to get used to new environments or changes to the environment
- Suggest they minimise the distance they have to walk e.g. to secure storage
- Be extra vigilant over trip hazards

Struggling with spatial awareness Poor sense of direction and have difficulty navigating

- Provide clear directions and maps for any journeys they need to make for work
- Arrange someone to accompany them on first visits
- Suggest use of navigation software for journeys to other offices / sites
- Provide a map of large buildings with routes marked
- Check they have not mixed up left and right in instructions and directions
- Suggest items need together are stored together
- Store frequently used items closest to workspace

Sensory sensitivity

Over-sensitivity (Hyper) Under-sensitivity (Hypo) causing stress, emotional distress and even physical symptoms such as headaches or nausea

Sensitive to taste or smell

- Discuss meal time arrangements with them and make adjustments E.g. bring own food or a private space to eat
- If others are eating nearby and this disturbs them, discuss coping strategies. This might include taking your own breaks at the same time to avoid this, or working from a different location during others' mealtimes if possible.
- Enable them to work away from kitchen or café areas if possible

Sensitive to certain material

- Grant an exemption from any corporate clothing, uniform or PPE, or provide a suitable alternative
- Suggest they bring in a cover or cushion for their chair

Visually sensitive

- Check that the lighting is suitable – if not change if you can
- Suggest an anti-glare filter for computer screen
- Change the colour background or contrast on computer screen
- Avoid or cover bright colours and patterns if possible
- Cover posters, wall displays or windows if possible
- Provide coloured or off-white paper

Sensitive to sound

- Consider how noisy an environment is when planning their work
- Enable the use of noise-cancelling headphones or music to block out noise distraction
- Permit regular /additional breaks or access to a quiet space
- Make special arrangements for fire alarm tests

Struggling with balance
Lacking awareness of their body e.g. not able to judge internal or external temperature

- Suggest they keep the space around their chair / desk free from clutter
- Support them to keep workspace clutter free E.g. in-tray, filing system, desk tidy
- Suggest they avoid food and drinks at their desk
- Suggest they use lids for hot drinks
- Provide equipment such as trays or trolleys help you with carrying items
- Remind sensitively about personal space
- Help them to monitor working temperatures / avoid heat sources – technology, signs or colleague support

Confidence, self-esteem, emotional issues

Tendency to avoid social and group situations

- Discuss with them what information to share with colleagues and if workplace awareness training is needed
- Offer support to deal with training, meetings and group activity
- Arrange for them to enter the room in advance or have someone to meet and walk in with them
- Agree an "opt out" plan when it gets too much
- Consider how activities are delivered – and if other methods may be more suitable

Do you have low self-esteem? Are you insecure and sensitive?
Do you feel you have under-achieved?
Do you find yourself doubting your work abilities?
Do you have difficulty staying motivated?

- Be aware of how criticism or negative feedback may affect them and consider how it is given
- Arrange support to deal with work reviews E.g. pre-planning meeting, agenda in advance
- Implement smaller, achievable goals to build your confidence
- Offer ample reassurance, praise and positive feedback

Dealing with workplace situations: good practice guidelines

This guide is designed to accompany the Line manager's guide, giving tips and advice for how to handle a range of workplace situations.

Recruitment

Job descriptions and adverts

- Should be clearly, concise and written in plain English
- Jargon or ambiguous language should be avoided or at least explained
- Sentence and paragraphs should be short and well-spaced
- Should include only the skills that are essential for the job to be carried out effectively.
- General personal qualities such as " good team player" or "able to work alone" should only be included if in fact they are a defining aspect of the job
- Should not include references to mental or physical health
- All should be available in alternative formats e.g. large print, Braille or audio format

Job applications

- Applications or cover letters should not have to be handwritten
- Application forms and other written materials should be in a clear rounded font such as Arial, Comic Sans Serif, and the font size should be 12 or bigger
- Paper application forms should be made available on non-white paper.
- Electronic forms should be able to be read out on a text-to-speech reader / software.
- Online application forms should be "stable" i.e. not moving and able to keep formatted
- You could offer to gather the application information over the telephone
- Instructions for completing the form should be very clear and unambiguous – it should be absolutely obvious what information is required in each part
- The form should include a box for applicants to say what help or adjustments they may need at interview.
- Any assessments involved in the application process must be relevant to the job. If needed they should be accessible by all applicants and reasonable adjustments should be made if needed e.g. additional time, typed rather than written

Pre-interview stage

- Give clear information about what will happen and be expected from the applicant at the interview
  - » List exactly what they need to wear and bring with them
  - » Tell the applicant how long the interview is
  - » Describe any tasks or assessments
  - » Give a broad outline of the types of questions that may be asked.
- Send clear instructions on how to get to the interview – maps and even a photo of the building can help.
- Be open to the applicant requesting someone to accompany them (but be clear what role they will play)
- If required supplying questions and /or case studies in advance
- If required advise the applicant they can take in notes / CV to aid their memory

Interviewing

Content of interviews – tasks and questions

- Choose tasks for the interview that accurately reflect what is expected of the individual in reality in the job
- Ensure the tasks can be accessed by all applicants e.g. assistive software can be used
- If you use group activities /tasks or role-plays are they assessing essential skills for the job? How else could you gather the information – e.g. case studies, competency questions
- Avoid asking irrelevant personal questions and you should not directly ask about an applicant's disability – even if they bring it up
- Avoid open ambiguous questions such as "Tell me about yourself" or "What kind of worker are you?" Instead, where possible, use specific closed questions such as "Tell me about your last job and the main tasks involved?" or "What are your top five skills?"
- Avoid hypothetical questions such as "What would you do if…." instead ask "When ….. happened in your last job what did you do?"
- Ask about only one issue at a time, avoiding multiple questions
- Allow plenty of time to for applicants to reply and not be hurried; only rephrase if needed
- Ask questions relating to events in chronological order, not jumping about in time
- Think about the language you use – say what you mean and avoid sayings or words with two meanings. Remember people may take what you say literally

Other things to consider

- Be clear about the structure of the interview and introduce everyone in the room
- Try to stick to the agreed format / timings, let them know the interview is coming to an end
- You may need to be clear about what the applicant needs to do such as "Please sit down in the chair" as they may not pick up on the social cue that it is expected that they sit down.
- Be aware the applicant's body language and tone of voice may be different from others and this should not be used in your decision making

Setting clear expectations and timeline

- Tell the applicant what will happen next and when to expect to hear from the organisation.
- Inform all the applicants of the outcome as soon as possible (whether successful or unsuccessful)
- Keep in touch if the decision is delayed.
- Once a job offer is made and accepted be very clear about when they will start

Adjustments

- Applicants may need additional time for any tasks or assessments
- Applicants may need someone to support in the interview.
  - » This may be for confidence as this is a new situation and unfamiliar people – in which case they are likely to wait outside or be quiet in the background.
  - » They may need support to understand the questions – in which case they would act as a "translator" so that the applicant can fully understand what is meant by the questions – rephrasing when needed.
  - » The supporter should not usually answer in the applicant's behalf
- Applicants may need supplementary questions to be able to give a full answer (agree these beforehand to maintain fairness)
- You may need to sensitively end the answer if someone is talking too much – saying something like "Thank you for that now let's move onto the next question....."
- A working interview or work trial might be a fairer way for the applicant to show their skills if they find formal interviews stressful or have difficulty communicating in those settings

Inductions

Before they start

If you know or even suspect that your new staff member is neuro-divergent then there are some things you could offer which would help them right from the start:

Start date letter

- Include details of the time, date and place they need to attend
- List what they need to bring
- The name of the person they will be meeting and exactly where
- An agenda of what will happen on that first day
- Who to contact if they have any questions

Pre-start visit

- A building tour to get used to the environment
- Introductions to new colleagues and their buddy/mentor
- Unwritten rules of the workplace e.g. where to hang your coat, if drinks are supplied, where to store your lunch

Disclosure

- Has a formal disclosure been made?
- Who do they want to know about their condition / difficulties?
- Is staff training or awareness session wanted / needed?

Discussion about workplace adjustments

- What has worked before
- Environmental issues
- Equipment or software needed
- Human support – e.g. buddy or mentor

Planning for the first day

- Try to have all equipment and information ready in advance
- If they have allocated areas e.g. desks, lockers, pegs make sure they are ready
- If possible have any accounts, passwords or codes ready for the first day
- If key people they will be working with are not going to be there can you get photos of them
- Make sure you or a senior colleague can be there on the first day
- Allow the buddy/mentor to plan some time away from their work to support the first day too

Making the most of the induction

A good induction is vital to help employees to feel part of the organisation, understand their role and perform at their best from the start. Inductions should involve:

- Organisational aims, objectives, values and standards
- What is expected of them in their role
- Introductions to key people who they will need to work with
- Information and processes they will need in their role
- Policies and procedures
- Information about how their team works together

There is a vast amount of information to be absorbed during the induction process which can be a challenge for anyone. You might choose to make a detailed plan of what will be covered when – this timetable can be used a checklist for both parties to keep on track.

Traditionally induction may be done through group sessions, reading and/or e-learning all of which present issues for someone who is neuro-divergent.

Therefore it is important to consider their difficulties and read the relevant sections in this toolkit before embarking on induction process.

It is highly likely you will need to plan additional induction time and resource but this investment will be worth it. Things to consider include:

- Training methods e.g. classroom vs. demonstration (see Training section)
- Learning styles / varying activities e.g. alternating theory and practical
- Alternative formats for written material
- Other ways to complete written assignments or tests
- Use of assistive software or other equipment
- Length of sessions (attentions and concentration)
- Additional support from a buddy or mentor
- Use of observation and shadowing, real life examples and case studies
- Memory aids
- Extended deadlines for completion
- Group sessions – planning 1-1 follow up meetings afterwards
- Be aware of information overload and allocating too much time to paperwork
- Could an information pack be supplied in advance of the start date containing this information so the staff member has additional time to digest it all?
- Offer support and company during breaks / lunch to start with
- Build in ample opportunities for questions

Other practical tools you could supply include:

- Organisational structure chart
- Map of the building
- Photos of colleagues with job role

Probation

During the induction it is likely you will be setting out a plan for their probation period which should include what is expected of them during this period. This could include:

- Competence in the role
- Performance targets
- Skill development
- Working relationships
- Knowledge of the company

For your neuro-divergent staff member it is important to be clear direct and specific about these expectations and identify any support, resource or information available to help. For example:

- If they struggle with communication and social interaction they may require additional support to integrate into a team and develop working relationships.
- If they struggle with time management and organisation they may need help to break tasks into smaller steps or to prioritise and plan their work.
- If they struggle to ask for help or identify what support or training they need, offer ample feedback, plenty of opportunities for questions and a range of options to help

Training and development

Planning training and development activities

Methods you use

- Large classroom based taught sessions may be difficult for people.
- Using practical activities, demonstration and interactive e-learning could dramatically increase the effectiveness of any learning. Try to vary the activities through a session
- Be aware not everyone can cope well with group session or team activities
- Some people may be uncomfortable reading out loud or answering in front of others, others may find writing on a flip chart or handout difficult. Always think about how the activities can be offered in different ways so staff are not faced with these situations

Length and structure of sessions

- It is important to offer either shorter sessions or the opportunity to take regular breaks
- Ideally enable people to get up and move around or do some form of physical activity e.g. doodling and using a stress ball as this will help with concentration

Training environment

- Ideally the room should have plenty of space for people to move around
- It should also have good ventilation and lighting – natural light if possible
- The room should be logically organised with all equipment stored in one place
- Individual work space should be clearly defined and uncluttered
- Posters, pictures or bright colours should be avoided or covered up

Technology

- If computers are to be used then they should be loaded with assistive software
- Anti-glare filters should be available
- Websites with accessibility options should be chosen
- Dictaphone or speech recorders could be used in place of note taking

Pre-course information

- Clear joining instructions should be provided including map/directions to the venue
- A clear structured agenda should be sent out so people know what to expect
- Handouts of the information to be given in the session could be sent out to aid understanding

Delivering training sessions

Communication

- Trainers should use clear direct and unambiguous language
- Written and verbal instructions should be offered for activities

Approach

- Trainers should engender a supportive atmosphere offering praise and positive feedback
- They should be aware of group dynamics and step in to prevent conflict
- It is also important to look out for signs of distress, discomfort or distraction and if necessary take and additional break in the session and speak to the individual to check all is okay.
- Some staff may need to agree an opt out plan if training session become too overwhelming

Training materials

Handouts

- Offer coloured paper if available
- Use dark coloured text on a light (not white) background.
- Avoid red and green text.
- Use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Verdana.
- Font size should be 12-14
- Avoid CAPITALS underline and italics – if you want to emphasis something use bold
- Make your test left-justified and full width.
- Line-spacing of 1.5 is preferable
- Use bullet points and numbering rather than continuous text.
- Use short, simple sentences in a direct style. Be concise.
- Give instructions clearly. Avoid long sentences of explanation.
- Lists of 'do's and 'don'ts' are more useful than continuous text
- Use active rather than passive voice and avoid double negatives.
- Flow charts. pictograms and graphics help
- Avoid abbreviations and jargon
- There should also be plenty of gaps for notes and wide margins for annotation

Slides and videos

- Watching slides projected on a screen can be difficult so always offer to supply the slides in paper format also
- It is also a good idea to break up the use of slides with other activities to avoid dips in attention and concentration
- It may help some staff members if you share links to videos in advance so they can watch them and take notes in their own time

Assessments or tests

- If using a test or assessed activity every effort must be made to not disadvantage any neuro-diverse staff member.
- Reasonable adjustments should be offered such as use of assistive technology, additional time or a scribe

Giving feedback

Good practice guidelines for line managers

Be aware that some individuals are sensitive to criticism

- Be positive about recent achievements and successes
- If you have to critical of performance make this constructive
- Be clear and specific – say exactly what they need to do to improve
- Ask for their ideas, suggestions and solutions
- Be supportive – offer or arrange help if needed

Be mindful that some individuals can't see the bigger picture

- As a line manager you have a wider view of work tasks which they don't have
- They may not see or understand how their work fits in with overall company and department goals
- They may not realise how their work affects others but you do
- They may only be focused on their own individual goals and not be aware of team goals
- They may also only be able to focus on the current task or piece of work and not on what other work may be coming
- Setting short term specific targets, goals and deadlines might help

Informal feedback

- As this can come at any time your staff member may not be able to prepare for it - if you can give them a bit of notice it will help
- They may not find it easy to respond straight away - if you can, allow them some time to reflect and think about what you've said before replying
- Is there someone you could suggest they talk things through with

Formal feedback

- This will usually happen in a meeting which is pre-planned.
- It could be a review or appraisal (see next section) or could be at the end of a piece of work or project
- It is a good idea to give your staff member some information about what will be discussed
- It could help the meeting if they talk it through with a colleague, buddy or mentor beforehand
- They may want someone to come to the meeting with them for support
- Give them opportunity to share their views, ideas, suggestions
- Provide some notes on what has been discussed and agreed – setting out clearly what needs to be done
- They again want to think things through afterwards and send in a response when they have had time to think further

Tips for giving feedback generally

What do you want out of it?

- Think about why you are giving feedback – what do you want the individual to do with it. Usually it is to change what they are doing, feel good about an achievement and overall to improve performance
- Use what needs to change as a basis for - what you say as this will help your feedback to be objective and positive and not personal and harsh
- Good feedback should prompt the individual to think for themselves what they need to do

Be prepared

- Familiarise yourself with any notes from previous meetings
- Plan what you are going to say
  - » List some examples of what you want to address
  - » Gather feedback from colleagues if needed
- Use the structure to keep you focussed

Timing

- If it is given to address an immediate issue:
  - » Try have the meeting sooner rather than later
  - » But if people have been upset about a situation it is best to let things calm down first
- If the feedback is routine:
  - » Take time regularly for informal feedback
  - » Book formal meetings ahead in the diary and ensure they happen
- Always allow individuals time to prepare so give adequate notice of a meeting
- Try not to make meetings too long as both parties could lose focus and concentration

Be objective and constructive

- Discussing examples and situations allow you to be specific and stay objective
- Describe what they did and the consequences without blaming
- Use evidence or data to illustrate your point
- Give suggested alternative actions
- Be clear about what they need to change
- Set clear SMART goals for improvement
- Balance positive with negative

Listen, observe and encourage dialogue

- Pay attention to the individuals body language to judge their responses
- Give the individual time to think and respond
- Listen carefully and consider their point of view
- Positively encourage ideas suggestions and solutions

Monitoring and ongoing conversation

- Monitor progress on agreed goals
- Give ongoing informal feedback

Reviews and appraisals

Good practice guidelines for line managers

Although the format of a review or appraisal is set by company policies and procedures there are ways you as a line-manager can make them more effective and less stressful for your neuro-divergent staff member. Consider the following:

Frequency

- It may well be easier for your staff member to have these types of meetings more frequently than their colleagues as:
  - It is will be easier for them to look back at work over a shorter period
  - They will get used to these type of meetings, which can make them less stressful
  - Short term goal setting may be more effective

Structure

- It will be easier if you use or create a structure for these meetings so your staff member knows exactly what will happen. Using an agenda can help a lot

Content

- It will help your staff member if you can give them information about what will be discussed in advance of the meeting. Not only will it give them time to prepare what they want to say but could significantly reduce the anxiety they feel about it.

Support

- Your staff member might appreciate support from a colleague, work buddy or mentor to prepare for a formal meeting of this type.
- Using the agenda and information the staff member can be helped to look back at their work and recognise successes and challenges as well as identifying future goals and development needs.
- They could make notes of discussions to refer to during the meeting
- The staff member may also need that person to accompany them to the meeting. If so you should agree their role in advance. They might be needed for confidence but also for communication – to perhaps explain what you mean and prompt the staff member to use the pre-prepared notes.

Your approach (see previous section)

- Be direct and specific – both about the issue and the actions needed from your staff member going forward
- Use clear plain English and keep sentences short and simple
- Be supportive and aware of their reaction to criticism

Paperwork

- Make sure any paperwork given as part of the process can be understood by your staff member. E.g. can it be put in an alternative format e.g. large print; or read by assistive software? Is it free from jargon and ambiguous complex language? Do you need to find out if you can print on non-white paper?
- Supply agendas and briefing papers in advance and ideally comprehensive notes from the meeting afterwards

Performance management

Good practice guidelines for line managers

Performance management is about getting the best out of every employee. Every conversation between you and your staff member you are managing their performance in some way. Regular open, honest, constructive and professional two-way conversations will bring the best results.

Good performance management will help all staff members to understand

- What the organisation is trying to achieve and how they can help this
- The skills, qualities and level of performance expected of them
- How they can develop their performance
- And if they are not performing to the required level – how they can address this

Please do not assume your neuro-divergent staff member is conscious of the overall organisational aims in their day to day work. They may also struggle to reflect on their own performance and what they want and need to develop. Some people may find

it difficult to receive feedback and have formal meetings (please see Feedback and Reviews sections for additional guidance) as well as keep accurate records. However they may approach problems in a different way and be able to suggest alternative solutions and ways of working given the opportunity.

Therefore the following tips may make the process both easier and more effective for both parties:

If they struggle to understand how they contribute to the organisational and team aims

- Can it be presented visually – e.g. flow diagram?
- Could examples and case studies be used to illustrate this?
- Is there a way they can understand other people roles – e.g. job shadowing?
- Could a workplace buddy or mentor provide guidance?

If they struggle to manage their own performance

- Set clear work goals
- Be specific and direct
- Work on shorter term objectives
- Schedule more frequent reviews
- Can they have interim meetings with a more experienced colleague?

If they struggle with self-reflection

- Do they need to spend time with a colleague, workplace buddy or mentor to help them?
- Do you need to create a questionnaire or checklist?
- Can you gather a broader perspective on their work from colleagues in their team?

If they struggle to identify learning and development needs

- Can defined choices be offered?
- Could examples or case studies illustrate the options

Performance management

If they struggle with formal meetings

- Can you have more frequent less formal conversations to help them prepare?
- How can you be more visible and approachable?

If they struggle with understanding the process, form-filling and record keeping

- Can the performance management process be visually presented – e.g. process flow diagram?
- Can paperwork be provided in an alternative format – e.g. audio, large print,
- Can assistive software be used?
- Could templates and examples be provided?
- Who can help them with this?

Make sure you set aside enough time for the conversations and also think about the environment you choose to have them in. Be aware of distractions, sensory issues and privacy.

The first section has been about promoting and maximising performance and this should continue as you recognise and reward good performance. This could be through the pay and reward system as well as training and development opportunities. See the Continuous Professional Development section for ideas on how to help people develop their skills and career.

As a line-manager you will also need to address performance issues. There are some key signs which might indicate performance is dipping or is likely to dip:

- Less engaged with you generally but particularly in one-to-one sessions
- Distancing themselves from colleagues
- Missing deadlines and poor time-keeping
- Unwillingness to go above and beyond
- Increased absence
- Making mistakes or work dropping below standard
- Customers or colleagues raise concerns
- Not showing interest in the organisation and its aims

But remember these could also be signs that your staff member needs some additional workplace adjustments so you should find out about this first.

When it is time to address under-performance it is important to be confident of the organisation's policies and procedures and take advice if needed. Conversations about performance need to be approached in the same way as feedback meetings or reviews – see previous sections. Key things to consider include:

Before

- Plan the meeting so you can give the staff member plenty of notice
- Be clear with them what the meeting is about
- Find a suitable private space where you won't be interrupted
- Allow plenty of time to discuss things fully but also plan for breaks
- Prepare in advance by collecting together facts and evidence
- Think carefully about what you know about your staff member and how they might react
- Check the staff member is able to prepare also – if they need help then a buddy or mentor could help
- Offer them the opportunity to have support in the meeting if they need it

Performance management

During

- Use positive body language
- Keep calm and objective
- Stick to the agreed agenda / issues you explained in advance
- Refer to specific evidence and examples to help them understand the issues
- Be clear and direct in what you say
- Ask questions and listen carefully to their views and explanations
- Be sensitive to their feelings
- Take a break if you or they need it
- Agree objectives and be very clear about what is expected
- Ensure support is in place so they can make the improvements
- Keep a record of the discussion

After

- Take some time to reflect on the meeting yourself
- Ask if the staff member would like to add anything after they also have had time to think
- Send out notes of the meeting and in particular any agreed actions
- Arrange a follow up call or meeting to check progress
- Ask their buddy or mentor to offer some additional support and guidance
- If the outcome is disciplinary action then again ensure you follow any company guidelines

What are the options for developing performance?

Once you have identified what needs to be improved then there are a number of things you can set in place to support including:

Formal training, if appropriate, to close a skill gap. See Training section for what to consider when arranging training.

Shadowing of a good performer

- This does however need to be more than just watching – the person being shadowed will need to take time to explain tasks and decisions.
- To make the most of this opportunity you could set clear structure for it such as exactly what they are observing and if they need to record what they have learnt.

Coaching and mentoring by an experienced colleague

- A coach helps the person to identify their own development needs and solutions
- A mentor is able to give advice, ideas and guidance in how to address issues
- It is likely that most neuro-divergent people will benefit from a combination of both

Temporary reallocation of work

- This could removing some duties to allow time to concentrate on those that need to be performed better
- Sometimes you may choose to move someone onto a particular project or into a different team to allow them the opportunity / support to improve their work
- However this can be unsettling for some neuro-divergent people due to the change involved.

Continuous professional development and promotion

As said in the previous section it is important to value good performance to maintain staff engagement. It is also good practice to offer continuous professional development and, if appropriate, ways to progress in their career – including promotion or a management role.

Career development

As in the previous section you could look at:

Formal training

- This may be internal short courses in which case the suggestions in the Training section may be helpful to consider
- It may also include a professional qualification or a prolonged period of study. In which case any training provider or educational establishment will need to be aware of any difficulties (with the staff member's permission)

Structured shadowing of someone who is competent in that role already

Coaching / mentoring from someone with skills, knowledge and experience in the potential role

Short term project role / Secondment

- Any change of role, team, location or management structure may be unsettling from someone who is neuro-divergent.
- It may affect their work performance and their stress levels
- Also any workplace adjustments in place will need to be reviewed.
- It is worth checking if the new role/project has additional tasks involving:
  - Larger teams and/or more contact with people
  - Additional administration tasks
  - More targets and deadlines
  - Extra prioritising, planning or organisation as these may present challenges for the neuro-divergent person

Promotion / Management

When someone is extremely capable and skilled in their role there is a chance they will be identified for promotion and as a potential team leader or manager. Although neuro-divergent people may be the high achievers in their team or department they may find some management tasks a challenge including:

- Planning ahead and thinking about different eventualities
- Prioritising workload and balancing multiple tasks
- Organisation of own work
- Organisation of the team and their various projects/tasks
- Managing targets and deadlines
- Increased paperwork and report writing
- Communicating verbally with large groups of people

Dealing with change

Any change in an organisation, team or role has the potential to cause issues for all employees. But change can be particularly difficult for those who are neuro-divergent. A change of team or manager will involve getting to know new people and a change to team dynamics. A change in working environment may mean new travel arrangements, new sensory issues and distractions. A change of role involves new work tasks and a new way of organising and planning work. Workplace adjustments will need to be reviewed and the whole process can cause a lot of stress and anxiety. Below are some strategies that you could use to make any change easier for people.

Approaching the change generally

- Be open honest and positive
- Prepare well for any conversations about the changes
- Explain the reasons behind the changes
  - Business benefits
  - Individual opportunities and development
- Ask for ideas and suggestions so people feel involved
- Give details about what will happen and when
- Be available to answer questions
- Be prepared to handle challenges positively

Supporting the individual leading up to the change

- Explain clearly what their new role and responsibilities will be
- Be available to discuss worries and answer questions
- Take time to talk through how the change might affect them
- Review current workplace adjustments and ensure they will be suitable after the change
- If not discuss further adjustments and ensure they are in place before the change takes effect
- Consider a staged approach to change
  - » Shadowing someone in the new role
  - » Workplace buddy / mentor skilled in the new role
  - » Workplace buddy / mentor to help integration into new team
  - » Workplace tour if new environment
  - » Phased introduction e.g. half days in new role/ location

Implementing the changes

- Make a plan for the changes and stick to it
- Be specific about any new requirements and responsibilities
- Help them establish a new work routine and structure
- Check the work environment is suitable

After the changes

- Consider adjusting or setting new performance goals
- Give sensitive feedback about work performance
- Offer reassurance, training and support to adjust
- Arrange more frequent work reviews
- Allocate time for support from workplace buddy/ mentor
- Consider awareness training for new colleagues / manager
- Recognise and celebrate successes

Notes

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