

# Supporting neurodiverse candidates and colleagues in the workplace

As part of Totum's ongoing commitment to DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), here are some recommended practices for supporting neurodiverse candidates and colleagues in their roles and within the wider workplace.

## What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to the way that everyone's brains naturally work differently from one another. According to ACAS, approximately one in seven people (15%) have some form of condition linked to neurodiversity, meaning that they behave, think, process, and interpret the world differently to someone who is neurotypical.

## For candidates or team members who identify as neurodiverse, consider implementing the following practices.

### Learn and understand

Try to learn more about each individual's neurodivergence so that you can best support them. Avoid making assumptions as these will vary from person-to-person, as experiences vary widely. While one person with ADHD might struggle to concentrate, another might not.

Above all, ask. One of the best ways to become more neuro-inclusive is to ask people who have been through the process. Gather feedback from neurodiverse candidates on the interview process to identify areas for improvement and blind spots.

### Flexible recruitment

Offer alternative communication methods during virtual interviews, such as repeating the interview question in the chat box, allowing candidates to write down questions or even taking short breaks.

Make sure to provide a general overview of the interview process before booking an interview and revisit this process prior to the interview starting.

If a firm is reluctant to provide questions in advance of an interview, ask them for the themes they will cover and give candidates time to prepare.

### Provide supportive environment and equipment

When it comes to helping neurodiverse employees settle into a new role, think about what equipment they might need. Some may find having dual screens helpful. Others may need help with a daily planner or a standing desk.

Neurodiverse individuals often struggle with the noise, lights, and distractions of an open-plan office, so consider offering quiet zones or remote working.

BUPA provides a helpful guide for managers looking to support neurodiverse colleagues in the workplace [here](#).

### Links to further resources

[What is Neurodiversity Week?](#)

[Supporting neurodiversity in the workplace: a manager's guide \(PDF, 1.0MB\)](#)

## Types of neurodiversity

Because each brain and person are different, it is difficult to put a number on how many types of neurodiversity exist. Different people will experience the same condition differently. However, some of the more recognised types of neurodiversity include: Autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and tic disorders such as Tourette's syndrome.

- Provide adjustable lighting
- Provide dual screens
- Offer standing desks
- Support working from home
- Offer a quiet zone
- Avoid desk sharing where relevant
- Provide noise cancelling headphones
- Provide light cancelling glasses
- Allow regular breaks
- Offer supportive equipment

## Work flexibly

The rigidity of specific working times - such as a 9am start - can be much more stress-inducing for neurodivergent people compared to their neurotypical counterparts, as they experience heightened worries about meeting expectations.

Allow them to focus more on their work and less on outside issues by considering flexible working hours and regular breaks. This can be especially helpful to individuals with ADHD, for example. Focus on outcomes, not output.

## Communicate clearly

Use direct language, avoid jargon, and provide structured instructions. Encourage questions and allow time to process information. Follow up verbal requests, instructions or meetings in writing.

## Regular check-ins

Maintain open communication and check in regularly to assess if adjustments are needed.

Finally, ensure you communicate directly with neurodivergent employees before implementing any changes to their work routines or discussing their condition with others. Respect their preferences regarding disclosing their neurodiversity and ask them how they would like to approach sharing this information. If you're uncertain, don't hesitate to ask how you can offer support or simply gain understanding - it's far more constructive than avoiding conversations that might seem challenging but are often quite manageable.