

EMPLOYING NEURODIVERSE PEOPLE WORKSHOP GUIDE



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Around 15% of people in the UK are neurodivergent, with 700,000 autistic adults and 10% with dyslexia. All of us need to recognise and support neurodiversity and highlight the need for more resources and support for those living with neurodivergent conditions.

Unfortunately, people with neurodivergent conditions still encounter challenges entering the workplace. Neurodiverse people are 3–8 times more likely to be unemployed than people with or without disabilities, with an unemployment rate of 30-40%.

Moreover, many Neurodiverse people either mask or hide their condition when they are in the workplace out of fear. Inclusive policies and practices in the workplace, as well as the need for more education and awareness around Neurodiversity will help create a more equitable and inclusive environment.

The objective of this course is to prompt your group to think about your own organisation and consider your workplace's approach to neurodiversity and inclusion and what you can do to improve it. They will be able to discuss if you need to shift people's attitudes or organisations procedures towards a more neurodivergent culture.

The workshop guide is structured like this.

LOOK – watch the videos and reflect on the content and message.

THINK – activities and questions linking the videos to their own experience and workplace.

REMEMBER – a summary of the key learning points.

Each section relating to the videos will last around 15 minutes.

PRACTISE – At the end of the series of videos there is a practical exercise which will bring the learnings together. Delegates should be encouraged to record any personal development actions on their Personal Action Plan sheet.

FEATURED VIDEOS

- Recruiting neurodiverse people
- Making adjustments and raising awareness
- Supporting and retaining neurodiverse people

FILM 1 – RECRUITING NEURODIVERSE PEOPLE

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

Give the group some background before you show the film. Every individual has a unique brain! But some managers, like David, harbour plenty of misconceptions around neurodiversity. David can't seem to find the right people but hasn't figured out that his recruitment process might be the problem.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Explain to the group that by being neuroinclusive in the recruitment and interview process, organisations of all sizes can help to ensure that all candidates are evaluated fairly, based on their qualifications and ability.

Ask the group to think about your current recruitment process. Do they believe it is neuroinclusive? Ask them to discuss and share evidence for this, as well as areas that can be improved. Your answers should cover these areas.

1. Look at your talent pipeline. Think about the skills and qualities you want candidates to possess, rather than what job you want them to fit into. Where are you advertising jobs? Does the jobs board you use have a neurodiversity category?
2. How flexible are the application methods you use? Do you have the technology to accept video/voice applications, and can candidates send in portfolios or website links to showcase their skills? Are any psychometric assessments you use unintentionally exclude neurodiverse candidates?
3. If you are carrying out an interview face to face provide as much information as possible up front – address, detailed directions, and any questions you plan to ask in advance.
4. 'On the spot' questions at interviews can disadvantage some neurodiverse people with memory or word finding difficulties. Think about other ways to get to know a candidate like a job specific task.

REMEMBER

Remind the group that you need to regularly look at your recruitment process and make any necessary adjustments to ensure neurodiverse applicants are not disadvantaged by your job advertising, applying for a role or in the interview stage.

FILM 2 – MAKING ADJUSTMENTS AND RAISING AWARENESS

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

Set the scene for the team before showing the video. In a discussion over lunch, Ryan thinks inclusion means the same rules for everyone, but Manesh explains how reasonable adjustments are there to level the playing field.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Explain that there's little point in having an inclusive recruitment process if there are few inclusive practises and processes in place once a candidate becomes an employee. Raising awareness and education might include publishing an Inclusion of Diversity Statement, training to reduce biases and sharing information about neurodivergent strengths and challenges.

Making adjustments should be encouraged to address individuals' challenges with everything from time management and communicating with their peers and managers, to their work station, technology and tools. Explain that it's true that some adjustments might need to be made to accommodate someone with a neurological condition. However, these don't need to be major; they can easily fit into your existing practices and can often apply to the whole team.

Ask the group to prepare key points to consider when making adjustments and make sure they cover the topics below before you close.

1. Make it clear!

Where some people are happy to keep things loose, someone with an ASD for example may need clearly defined rules and instructions to be most productive.

2. Neurodiverse or not, everyone's different

Be careful not to make assumptions about people with a neurodiverse condition (good or bad), because of how you think someone like them might be. Explore what people can and can't do and avoid thinking of some roles as only suitable for people who are "neuro typical" or "normal".

3. Communication Styles

We all have our preferred methods of communication, but when you're working with someone who is neurodiverse it's important to be especially accommodating of their preferred communication methods.

Remind the group of the eyeglasses analogy in the film. Centuries of normalisation has rightfully ingrained this knowledge in us that some people need glasses and others don't, to the point where it is now deemed unremarkable, and nobody even thinks of it as a reasonable adjustment some people need to do their job.

REMEMBER

There's little point in having an inclusive recruitment process if there are few inclusive practises and processes in place once a candidate becomes an employee. Ask new starters if they require any workplace adjustments as part of the onboarding process and regularly check in. Raise awareness of neurodiversity with all staff and provide support for those who need a different environment to do their best work.

FILM 3 – SUPPORTING AND RETAINING NEURODIVERSE PEOPLE

LOOK (play video, 2 minutes)

Set the scene for the team before showing the video. In many organisations there is little knowledge of how well neurodiverse individuals are progressing or without support are 'quiet quitting'. Stigma or misunderstanding by others relating to neurodiversity was cited as a significant challenge to sustaining employment. David clearly needs to learn how to support and encourage inclusion in the team.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Explain that neurodiversity champions can help in workplaces by promoting and supporting the inclusion of neurodivergent individuals. They can serve as advocates and allies for neurodiversity, helping to raise awareness and understanding of neurodiversity within the organisation.

Ask the group how they could help introduce or become a champion in your workplace. Answers should touch on these points.

- Understand what is currently happening in your organisation.
- Help review the hiring process.
- Identify and find ways to remove barriers to inclusion and belonging.
- Offer mentorship programmes for neurodivergent colleagues.
- Signpost information within the organisation and external information.
- Create allies and build networks.
- Deliver awareness raising activities and training to help with employee groups.
- Encourage and support the representation of neurodivergent individuals at all levels of the organisation.

REMEMBER

Everyone sees the world differently. Creating a work culture that celebrates this will help neurodiverse people feel they belong, and they are valued for their differences. Think about how you can introduce champions in your workplace to promote and support the inclusion of neurodivergent individuals.

GROUP EXERCISE

The objective of this exercise is to get the group to discuss the importance of making adjustments for neurodiverse colleagues.

Ask the group to discuss and record what questions we should ask neurodiverse employees in order to make reasonable adjustments. The answers should cover these areas.

1. Sensory difference. Which physical environment do you find most challenging? E.g., lighting, sound, space, temperature, smells.
2. Communication. What are your communication preferences? E.g., written (letters, emails, texts) graphics (pictures, graphs) or verbal (spoken information).
3. Social interactions. Would you benefit from help with workplace interactions? E.g., meeting etiquette.
4. Structure. Do you need a clear structure to your work? E.g., agendas before meetings, clear and specific briefs and instructions.
5. Quiet spaces. Do you need a quiet space to go to if it becomes noisy or you feel overwhelmed?