



Towards inclusion and equity
for neurodivergent workers
and workers
with 'invisible' disabilities.

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What we will cover...

- The social model of disability
- What is neurodivergency?
- What are invisible disabilities?
- Barriers to accessing reasonable adjustments for this group of people
- Case study: Neurodivergent teacher in Scotland
- Case study: Marion McLaughlin, Aurora Autistic Consulting
- Examples of adjustments
- Reflection



Activity 1

With the person sitting next to you, please share the following

- 1) What motivated you to select this workshop today?
- 2) Are you familiar with some of the topics of this workshop already ?
- 3) What are you hoping to learn more about?



Social Model of Disability

The Social Model of Disability was developed by Disabled people and describes people as being disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. If modern life was set up in a way that was accessible for Disabled people, then they would not be excluded or restricted.



Neurodivergent and neurodiversity

Neurodiversity means the natural variations in the make-up of the human brain.

For individuals: Being **neurodivergent** means having a brain that is built significantly different from most others. Being **neurotypical** means not having a variation considered to be neurodivergent.

ADHD

ASD

Dyslexia

Dyscalculia

Tourette's

Sensory
Processing
Issues

Dysgraphia

Dyspraxia

'Invisible' Disabilities

An 'invisible' disability is a disability or health condition that is not immediately obvious to others. It can defy stereotypes of what people might think disabled people 'look like'.

Stereotypes and assumptions make it difficult for people with non-visible disabilities to access reasonable adjustments, or sometimes to be understood. The impact of living with a non-visible disability can be slight or can have a huge effect on someone's life.



Non-Visible Health Conditions

including diabetes, chronic pain or fatigue, respiratory conditions, auto-immune conditions, Lupus

Cognitive Impairment

incl. dementia, traumatic brain injury, or learning disabilities

'Invisible' Disabilities

ASD

Visual Impairments

Sensory and Processing Difficulties

Hearing Loss

Mental Health Conditions

incl. anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, personality disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorders



What the law says about 'disability'?

The law (Equality Act 2010) sets out when someone is considered to have a disability and is protected from disability discrimination. Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 states that you're disabled if:

- you have a physical or mental impairment
- your impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to do normal day-to-day activities

The disability must have lasted, or be expected to last, at least 12 months.

'Disability' is one of the 9 protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.



What does the law say about neurodivergent equality at work?

- ❑ People who are neurodivergent may meet the legal definition of disability and be defined as disabled people for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.
- ❑ Not all neurodivergent employees will consider themselves to have a disability or feel comfortable disclosing. Under the law, employees have the right to identify as having a disability, or not to identify. But the legal definition of 'disability' under the Equality Act 2010 means that neurodivergent workers could meet the conditions; and protected from discrimination at work. This is on a case-by-case basis.



Why does understanding the law matter?

What is the connection between neurodivergent workers and those with invisible disabilities?

Knowledge is power. Although different yet interconnected, often, neurodivergent people and those living with invisible disabilities face similar struggles with:

1. Stigma associated with their disabilities.
2. Challenges disclosing.
3. Challenges being taken seriously if they 'appear okay'
4. Misconceptions and associated narratives and cultures
5. Struggle to access reasonable adjustments
6. Lack of knowledge/understanding of what adjustments can be made



Reasonable Adjustments



01

The Law - Equality Act 2010

Employers have a legal duty to consider making reasonable adjustments to remove, reduce or prevent any disadvantages that disabled workers face.

02

2024 Update

Updated definition of disability: “a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities” now includes “the person’s ability to participate fully and effectively in working life on an equal basis with other workers”

03

Expectation

The law recognises that to secure equality for disabled people, work may need to be structured differently, support given, and barriers removed.

Despite this, only 7% of STUC survey respondents think reasonable adjustments are fully understood by employers, and half of respondents had experienced challenges negotiating/securing reasonable adjustments for members.



Different Types of Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person. They can cover any area of work.



alternative methods

- giving more time for written or reading tests in interviews
- distributing work differently within a team
- assigning different responsibilities or offering another suitable role
- alternative training methods if classroom-based training is difficult



change in environment

- changing lighting above workstation
- changing layout of a work area/entrance to building
- providing accessible car parking space
- dedicated toilet facilities
- holding interview in a wheelchair-accessible room



alternative working arrangements

- changing working patterns
- distributing breaks more evenly across the day
- flexible working
- WfH or hybrid working
- adjustments for absence – incl. paid time off for medical appointments and treatment
- phased return after absence



provide equipment, services or support

- extra/adapted equipment, (chairs, software, phones)
- accessible format for emails and documents
- giving 1-to-1 support, i.e. a mentor, or help prioritise their work
- other specialist support, i.e. sign language interpreter



Case study: Teacher (Ronja)

- ✓ Late ADHD diagnosis
- ✓ taking up space and identifying as disabled
- ✓ transparency with staff & children
- ✓ lack of knowledge to advocate for self
- ✓ medication issues



Barriers to neurodivergent workers

“Reading of documents, policies and emails, often within tight timeframes, can add pressure to staff with dyslexia. The volume and variety of tasks to complete by deadlines could be problematic for someone with ADHD or dyspraxia, while the social nuances and sensory stimuli of a bustling staffroom could represent more stress than relaxation for an autistic person.”



Stigma & potential
discrimination



Different workflow or
pace or ways of taking in
information



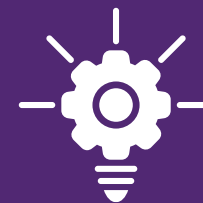
Heightened stress and potential
of burnout due to 'masking'



Expectation on the individual
– assumptions about energy /
social



Lack of knowledge about
neurodivergence /
'invisible disabilities'



Lack of information
about reasonable
adjustments

Case study input

Marion McLaughlin
Aurora Autistic
Consulting



Reasonable Adjustments

STUC Reasonable Adjustment Report 2024 Examples of Reasonable Adjustment Wins

“I managed to get a school to agree to change a teacher’s timetable to allow them to access health services on a weekly basis.”

“Negotiated more time working from home for an autistic staff member.”

“I received support to access my treatment, and my chronic illness would no longer trigger stressful absence management meetings.”

“Lightweight laptop with shoulder bag to reduce pressure on arms and hands.”

“I am now getting the neurodiversity assessment I have never” had.”

“Securing a functioning laptop for a dyslexic member.”



Reasonable Adjustments

STUC Reasonable Adjustment Report 2024 Examples of Reasonable Adjustment Wins

“My employer put in some helpful reasonable adjustments...including removal from after school activities, lunch and break duties and a different approach to Parent Evenings as a Primary School Teacher.”

“Allowing me to have blocked off time one afternoon a week so I can work from home and leave school early, rather than wait to see each week if I am taken for cover.”

“Allowing teacher to not teach PE.”

“One person had Dyslexia Software installed on their PC.”



Reflection

What will you take from this session?

What suggestions / ideas can we share, as a group?

