

A woman with dark, curly hair is shown in profile, looking down at a pink smartphone she is holding with both hands. She is wearing a yellow and white horizontally striped long-sleeved shirt and a black smartwatch with a colorful, patterned band on her left wrist. The background is a blurred office or modern interior with large windows and an orange wall on the left.

Published November 2025

Building a Neuroinclusive Workplace

A practical toolkit for confident
conversations that help neurodivergent
employees achieve more

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where people matter

Understanding Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity recognises that brains work differently – and that’s not just normal, it’s valuable. Each person has their own unique profile of strengths and challenges that, depending on the situation, can be an advantage or create barriers.

In the workplace, this cognitive diversity isn’t just important, it’s essential for accessing the full range of solutions to complex problems.

When someone’s thinking patterns sit outside what we consider typical, we understand them as neurodivergent. This umbrella term includes specific profiles you may recognise: autistic people, those with ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurological differences.

More than 1 in 7 people¹ – around 15% of your workforce – are neurodivergent. This number continues to grow as people gain better understanding of their own needs and differences.

While individual accommodations will always be necessary, creating more flexible workplace cultures benefits everyone – neurodivergent people and beyond.

At Brain in Hand we live neuroinclusion daily. 80% of the people who worked on this toolkit are neurodivergent.



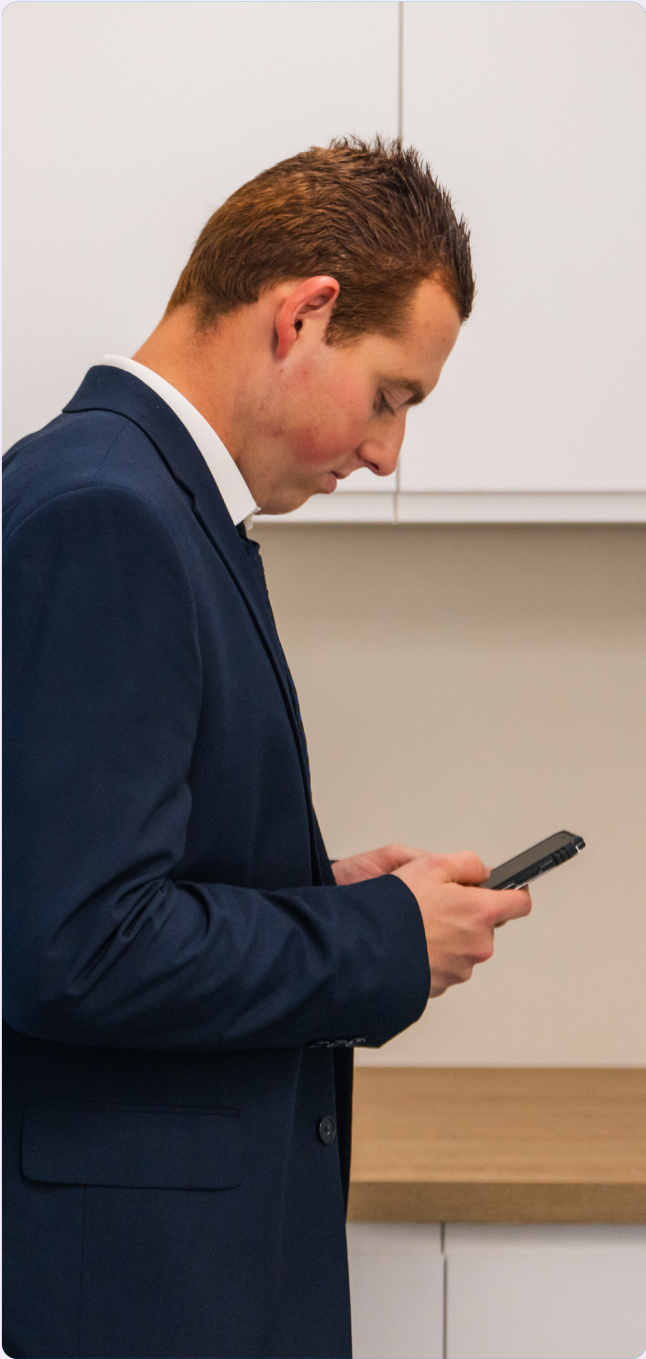
What is neurodiversity?
Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in how human brains function and process information. It recognises that differences in thinking, learning, and behaviour, such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other cognitive profiles are part of normal human diversity, not deficits that need to be fixed.

What is neurodivergence?
Neurodivergence describes individuals whose brains function differently from what is considered “neurotypical.” This may include people with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette’s syndrome, or other neurological differences. Being neurodivergent means experiencing and interpreting the world in unique ways, which can bring both challenges and valuable strengths.

What is neuroinclusion?
Neuroinclusion means creating environments at work, in education, and in society, that recognise, respect, and support neurodiverse individuals. It involves removing barriers, embracing different communication and working styles, and ensuring that everyone can contribute and thrive regardless of how their brain works.

The workplace reality

Everyone has the potential to thrive in the right environment. Yet traditional, rigid workplaces often create unnecessary barriers for neurodivergent people.



Common workplace challenges neurodivergent people face:

- Inflexible working hours that don't account for individual regulation needs or peak performance times
- Communication mismatches when instructions seem clear to neurotypical colleagues but lack essential detail
- Social expectations prioritised over outcomes – valuing workplace blending over actual performance and capability
- Jargon-heavy conversations that create unnecessary confusion and exclude people from decisions
- Overstimulating environments like intense open-plan offices that make concentration difficult

The strengths neurodivergent people bring:

- Deep focus and attention to detail that catches what others miss
- Specialist knowledge and expertise developed through intense interests
- Pattern recognition that identifies connections and solutions others overlook
- Direct, honest communication that cuts through ambiguity
- Fresh perspective and curiosity that challenges assumptions and drives innovation

The 15% edge

More than 1 in 7 people are neurodivergent¹. That's around 15% of your workforce.

But most workplaces still aren't set up to support those people well². The result? Burnout³, poor mental health, high absenteeism⁴, poor retention, and immense missed potential.

Brain in Hand's research shows that 43% of neurodivergent workers intend to leave their jobs within the year⁵, often because simple changes weren't made to help them thrive.

That's not just a wellbeing issue – it's a big business risk. And a major missed opportunity.

Research suggests that neurodiverse teams (a mix of neurodivergent and neurotypical people) can be up to 30% more productive⁶. Neurodivergent professionals can be a catalyst for competitive advantage – if you know how to attract, recruit, develop, and retain them.

Especially as skills shortages⁷, ongoing challenges with churn⁸, and rising employment costs⁹ make recruiting and retaining talent harder than ever. Supporting 15% of your people to stay longer and achieve more is a clear-cut win for progressive people leaders.

We know you know that. Building cultures where everyone can thrive and add value matters – however people think, work, and learn. We also know that understanding how can be challenging.

This toolkit is here to help; developed based on our experiences supporting over 25,000 autistic and ADHD people across the UK to reduce anxiety, build confidence, and thrive at work.



Research suggests that neurodiverse teams can be up to 30% more productive than neurotypical teams¹⁰.

A playbook for action

Acas research finds that good practice neuroinclusion in the workplace can reduce turnover to as low as 8%, against a national average of 34%¹¹.

Most organisations want to be more neuroinclusive but aren’t sure how to move forwards. HR and DEI leaders often ask us the same things¹²:

“What if we don’t have the budget for big changes?”

“How do we ask the right questions without saying the wrong thing?”

“Do we need a diagnosis before making adjustments?”

“What do reasonable adjustments even look like?”

“How can we give managers confidence navigating hard conversations?”

The good news is, supporting neurodivergent colleagues doesn’t have to be complicated or costly. And many effective adjustments – clearer communication, flexible working, regular check-ins – benefit everyone. (Stuck for ideas? Flick to page 15 for some ideas of reasonable adjustments).

That’s why we’ve built this toolkit: to share the neurodiversity support that’s been proven to work.

Inside you’ll find practical, hands-on, confidence-building tools you can take straight into meetings, from expert neurodiversity partners you can trust.

So you can start small, build momentum, and begin building a workplace that supports and empowers everyone. And boosts the bottom line.



Research shows the right support for neurodivergent colleagues can deliver up to 400% ROI¹³.

What’s the law around neuroinclusion?

With Jodie Hill, Founder of Thrive Law

Legal responsibilities are often where HR teams feel most exposed. As expert neurodiversity partners, Brain in Hand is committed to helping you bridge law and lived experience, turning compliance into a springboard for inclusion.

Under the Equality Act 2010¹⁴, many types of neurodivergence meet the definition of a disability. This triggers the legal duty to make reasonable adjustments – from flexible hours to tailored communication styles – so neurodivergent staff aren’t placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to neurotypical peers.

You don’t need to wait for a diagnosis before acting. If a colleague is showing signs that traits linked to neurodivergence are impacting their day-to-day role, the duty to explore adjustments may already apply. Focus on the impact of the neurodivergence on their ability to do the role, not the label. Acting early protects both your staff and the organisation.

It’s important you know that disclosure is voluntary. You can’t require staff tell you they’re neurodivergent. What you can do is create a culture where people feel safe to share. The Acas guidance is clear¹⁵: confidentiality, sensitivity, and trust are key.

Performance concerns need careful handling. If capability issues arise, first consider how unmet needs or inadequate adjustments may contribute.



Jumping straight to performance management or disciplinary action risks discrimination claims. Of course, legal responsibilities are front-of-mind – but remember that neuroinclusion isn’t just about compliance. This isn’t a box-ticking exercise: it’s about showing your people you take this seriously and enabling everyone to thrive.

The fact that there were 40% more discrimination claims related to neurodivergence in 2024 than 2020 highlights that many employers are struggling to truly understand and support their neurodivergent colleagues¹⁶.



Legal foundation

HR's neuroinclusion checklist

✓ Know your legal duty

Neurodivergence often meets the legal definition of a disability. That triggers a duty to explore reasonable adjustments in good faith.

✓ Don't wait for diagnosis

If traits are clearly impacting someone's ability to work, explore adjustments now. The earlier you act, the better for performance, wellbeing, innovation, and retention.

✓ Go beyond compliance

Compliance is the floor, not the ceiling. Be proactive:

- Embed neurodiversity into your EDI and wellbeing strategies
- Review processes and policies with a neuroinclusion and accessibility lens
- Train managers to spot barriers and have supportive conversations
- Audit your recruitment and workplace policies against Acas guidance
- Review your adjustments policy annually
- Complete a neuroinclusion audit (or ask someone to help with this)

✓ Use learning conversations as a springboard

There's no definitive list that'll work for every person in every organisation (although page 10 has some thought-starters for you) but typically adjustments fall into three categories: regulation, communication, and flexibility.

Use conversations with neurodivergent colleagues (this toolkit will help you!) to understand what they're already doing, then use that as a springboard to inform tailored support for other people.

✓ Handle disclosure with care

Disclosure is voluntary: don't pressure colleagues to share. Instead:

- Build trust with clear policies: explain why you ask, how you'll use information, and what support is available.
- When someone does disclose: thank them, record it confidentially, and ask what would help. Document the conversation, agree actions and commit to regular reviews.

✓ Address performance fairly

Investigate how unmet needs or missing adjustments could be factors before moving to disciplinary or capability procedures. Seek advice before acting.

Working with workplace needs assessors and OHPs

With Devon Lowndes,
Director of Self Agency,
Neurodiversity Consultants



“Equality isn't treating everyone the same. After all, we all have unique brains and ambitions. It's about removing barriers so that everyone has the chance to be equal. Neurodiversity is everybody. It's about building environments that support everyone's needs and goals.”

- Devon Lowndes

It's the workplace – not the person – that creates disablement. This is the Social Model of Disability¹⁷, which tells us that people are disabled by inflexible environments, systems and attitudes.

Workplace assessors and Occupational Health Professionals (OHPs) can be invaluable partners in identifying and removing those barriers – but only if employers understand how to work with them.

Workplace assessors versus OHPs

Who should you work with on improving neuroinclusion?

- Workplace assessors specialise in understanding job roles and identifying adjustments to reduce the impact of environmental and systemic barriers.
- OHPs focus on health-related impacts in the employment context.

While both can recommend changes, assessors typically take a more proactive, practical and relevant approach rather than making general recommendations.

Done well, working with assessors and OHPs isn't a tick-box exercise. It's a partnership that reduces risk, protects wellbeing, and drives performance.

Remember: adjustments aren't “special treatment.” Adjustments remove barriers, creating a fair workplace for everyone.

Working with Assessors & OHPs

HR's neuroinclusion checklist

✓ Assume diversity is present

Act based on the barriers your people experience, not labels. Support should be needs-based, not diagnosis-led: waiting can cause harm and delay support.

✓ Act fast

Don't let recommendations languish on your G-Drive. You don't need to get everything perfect to have a positive impact. Start small.

✓ Collaborate

Recommendations are a springboard for discussion. Bring staff into the conversation. If suggestions aren't workable, explore options: don't be dismissive.

✓ Lead with curiosity

31% of neurodivergent colleagues don't disclose¹⁸. But being curious about how you can help them with their challenges doesn't need disclosure.

✓ Think beyond budget

Many adjustments are free or cost little, and some may be supported via Access to Work. Explore all avenues: don't write-off change because of budget limitations.

✓ Trial ideas

You don't know what might work until you try. Trial adjustments before dismissing effectiveness. Experiment and learn.

✓ Be transparent

Explain the purpose of assessments and interventions, what the process involves, and give colleagues choice and control. Think empowerment.

✓ Share context

Give plenty of background like job descriptions, working patterns, and examples of challenges so recommendations are relevant, tailored, and actually help.



Everyday neuroinclusion: Small changes create big impact

With Gemma Loverock, Head of People, Brain in Hand

Over half of the Brain in Hand team is neurodivergent so we live neuroinclusion daily – and we see what really makes a difference.

There are lots of adjustments you could consider but building an inclusive workplace starts with a simple mindset shift: every person brings unique strengths.

When you recognise this, you understand the value and purpose of making small adjustments that make your workplace work better for everyone. And that's also what we see, time and again: that even the smallest tweaks can free huge potential.

Many organisations still operate according to an outdated, ineffective model of performance that's inherently rigid and unaccommodating to diversity. Reframe neuroinclusion – and inclusion more broadly – away from being a burden. Instead, move from compliance to curiosity.



Neuroinclusion isn't just about policies. It's about everyday interactions and conversations that shape whether people feel safe, supported, and empowered to perform at their best.

Over the next few pages we'll share practical tips and a conversation template to guide you, but the core principle is this: have the conversations. Starting discussions like this can feel scary but doing something imperfectly is better than doing nothing.

Each conversation you have, each accommodation you trial: they're opportunities to understand how your people work best. To understand what energises them and what gets in their way. So you can move little-by-little towards a workplace that's more inclusive. And a workforce that's more productive, happier, and more engaged.

Everyday neuroinclusion:

HR's neuroinclusion checklist

✓ Challenge outdated working models

Rigid, one-size-fits-all expectations overlook talent. Inclusion means recognising that different ways of working can deliver equally strong (or stronger!) results.

✓ Shift from compliance to curiosity

Neuroinclusion isn't about ticking boxes. It's about asking: what helps this person thrive? That reframe can make the topic feel less intimidating. Remember: most changes towards neuroinclusion help everyone.

✓ Value small tweaks

You don't need to overhaul everything. Simple adjustments like flexible break times or providing quieter space can have a huge impact. Start small and keep building.

✓ Normalise conversations

Everyday check-ins signal support is expected, not exceptional. Coach and train managers to navigate these with confidence (the next pages will help).

✓ Act, even if imperfectly

The biggest risk is doing nothing. You don't need to get everything right. You just need to start; learn; review; evolve.

✓ Treat inclusion as an opportunity

Framing adjustments as performance enablers rather than fixes changes the tone for everyone. See neuroinclusion as an opportunity, not an obligation.



brain in hand
can help you
achieve more

Getting practical

Adjustments to consider

There’s no definitive list of adjustments that’ll work for every person in every organisation. Neuroinclusion can’t be quantified into items on a to-do list. But here are some practical ideas we’ve seen working to reduce barriers and improve performance for ADHD and autistic colleagues.



Strengths and motivation

Help your people lean into what energises them and sustain focus.

- Match tasks to what energises people where possible
- Offer different ways to show outcomes (written, visual, spoken)
- Create opportunities to showcase strengths on projects
- Build flexibility into roles so people can play to their strengths

Barriers and environment

Reduce stressors and remove friction in the work environment.

- Offer quiet zones or noise-cancelling headphones
- Adjust lighting to reduce glare or flicker
- Allow flexibility (home/office; start/end times; break times)
- Reduce sensory load where possible (e.g. background noise, interruptions)
- Streamline workflows to remove unnecessary complexity

Communication and collaboration

Adapt how information is shared so it lands clearly.

- Share agendas before meetings and follow with bullet-point summaries
- Provide clear written instructions alongside verbal ones
- Offer options for verbal or written feedback
- Allow time to process questions before expecting answers
- Use plain, clear language and avoid unnecessary jargon
- Use visual planning tools
- Build-in buffer time between meetings

Growth and development

Make learning and progression opportunities inclusive for everyone.

- Encourage self-paced professional development
- Offer flexible training formats (recorded, written, live)
- Break training into shorter, bite-sized modules
- Provide mentors who understand neurodivergence

Providing access to Brain in Hand’s coaching platform is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to support your ADHD and autistic colleagues.

Combining practical human support and simple digital tools, our platform helps people manage the day-to-day, build confidence, and reduce anxiety. Accessible 24/7 and available on-demand, it helps to maintain wellbeing and prevent escalations.

The ROI is clear: £4 returned for every £1 invested, with 64% of colleagues experiencing better mental health and 66% achieving more. Plus 26% higher retention.

Speak to our team:

-  workplace@braininhand.co.uk
-  braininhand.co.uk/work
-  01392 247 909

Getting practical

Neuroinclusive conversations: Practical pointers

Before we leap into a fill-in template that HR leaders or managers can take straight into meetings, let's look at some overarching tips for handling these conversations effectively.

Tips to guide effective neuroinclusion conversations:

Ask open questions

Open versus closed questions make the difference between surface-level answers and insightful discovery. It's impossible to learn what you don't already know if you rely on closed questions.

For example: "What aspects of your workspace make work harder?", not "Is your desk location OK?"

Explore ideas

What works for one person might not work for another. Explore ideas rather than making assumptions. But remember that colleagues might not know what they need, so signpost to additional resources for support.

For example: "Visual planning tools can sometimes be helpful, or printed-out agendas. How do those sound to you?"

Keep conversations manageable

Too many questions can feel overwhelming, especially when someone might not know what they need. Choose a handful of broad prompts – ideally provided beforehand to give people time to prepare – and allow the conversation to adapt. Think little and often, not annual and sprawling.

For example: "I'd love to chat about your role, to understand what energises you and whether there's anything you might struggle with. We can see where the conversation moves from there."

Celebrate strengths first

Starting with strengths before discussing challenges reassures people you value what they already do well. Position accommodations as positive opportunities to enhance performance, not remedies to patch up weaknesses.

For example: "You bring incredible attention to detail. What helps you maintain that focus?"

Listen more than you talk

Effective conversations aren't about filling silence, they're about holding space. This might be the first time the person you're talking to has felt heard about their challenges and some strong emotions may come up. Allow people time to process fully.

For example: "I hear that you feel very frustrated and upset. Take your time – I'm happy to listen."

Treat adjustments as experiments

Trial one or two small tweaks and agree a simple success measure. If it works, great. If not, adapt. This agile approach avoids over-engineering solutions or inadvertently creating new barriers.

For example: "Let's introduce 30-minutes buffer between meetings to avoid back-to-back overload. In two weeks, let's catch back up and see if you felt less overwhelmed. How does that sound?"

Make it ongoing, not one-off

Neuroinclusion isn't a one-off fix. People's challenges, strengths, circumstances and needs shift, so a single conversation isn't enough. Making check-ins part of your ongoing rhythm shows you take support seriously and builds trust.

For example: "It's been a month since we spoke about workload. How are things feeling now? Are there any new barriers we should talk about?"

Build organisation-wide awareness

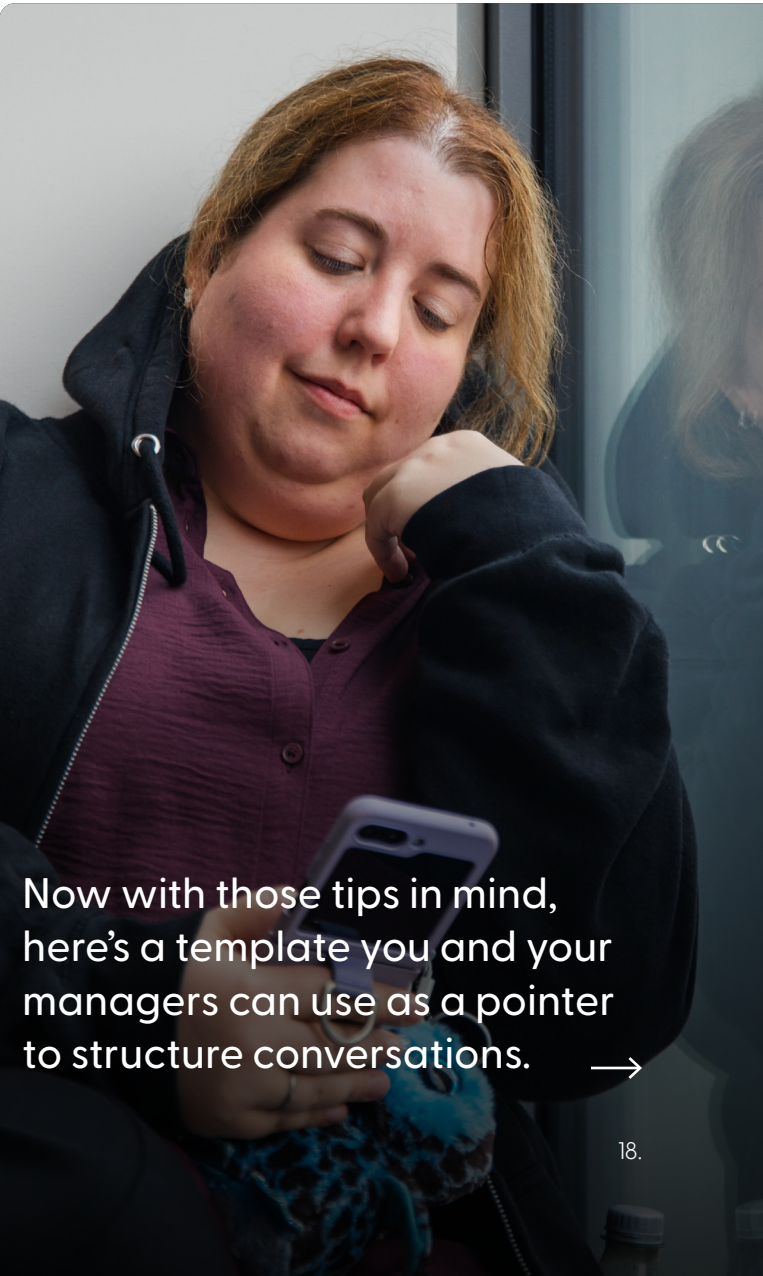
Neuro-inclusion isn't just about one-to-one conversations. Build shared understanding across your teams: run awareness sessions, share lived experiences and create common language. This normalises adjustments and stops them feeling exceptional.

For example: "Based on the stories we heard at last week's neurodiversity session, we're going to trial sharing bullet-point summaries after meetings for the next month, so everyone has a clear record."

Remember: what helps one, helps many

Adjustments designed with neurodivergent colleagues in mind often benefit everyone – including the people who wouldn't otherwise raise the issue. For instance, clear agendas, respectful pauses, and options to contribute in writing or verbally also support introverts, non-native speakers, and colleagues juggling lots of plates.

For example: "We'll circulate meeting agendas in advance and leave space for written contributions afterwards, so everyone has a fair chance to input."



Now with those tips in mind, here's a template you and your managers can use as a pointer to structure conversations. →

Getting practical

Structuring neuroinclusion conversations: a template

Using this template

Who?

HR leaders or line managers having conversations with neurodivergent colleagues or colleagues who are experiencing barriers to work.

When?

When you’ve spotted that someone is potentially experiencing a barrier, or on a regular cadence as part of your ongoing neuroinclusion conversations.

Why?

To boost HR professionals’ and managers’ confidence and give your organisation a practical resource to start moving neuroinclusion forwards.

How?

Pick a few questions from each section that feel relevant, capture notes, agree the adjustments you’ll trial, and then set a time to review. This isn’t about compliance; it’s about creating space to listen and explore together.



Strengths and motivation

Help your people feel valued and show adjustments are about enabling success.

- “What energises you at work?”
- “When do you feel you’re working at your best and why?”
- “What helps you stay focused and engaged?”

Notes

Actions

Adjustments to trial:

Success measures:

Review date:

Barriers and environment

Uncover what gets in the way of performance or wellbeing.

- “What aspects of our workplace setup make work harder for you?”
- “What aspects of our processes or systems create barriers for you?”
- “What small changes would make the biggest difference day-to-day?”

Notes

Actions

Adjustments to trial:

Success measures:

Review date:

Communication and collaboration

Learn how to adapt working styles so information lands clearly.

- “How do you prefer to receive feedback or instructions?”
- “What helps you feel clear about expectations for a task or project?”
- “What’s the best way for us to communicate when things are urgent?”

Notes

Actions

Adjustments to trial:

Success measures:

Review date:

Wellbeing and support

Spot early signs of overwhelm and agree proactive support.

- “Are there signs I should look for that mean you’re struggling?”
- “What helps when you’re feeling overwhelmed?”
- “How can I check in with you in a way that feels helpful?”

Notes

Actions

Adjustments to trial:

Success measures:

Review date:

Growth and development

Focus on career progression and longer-term needs.

- “What skills or opportunities would you like to develop?”
- “What helps you learn best?”
- “What would make you feel more confident about your future here?”

Notes

Actions

Adjustments to trial:

Success measures:

Review date:

The bottom line

From conversation to culture

Neuroinclusion is about mindset. Curiosity, flexibility, and small, consistent actions build workplaces where everyone can perform at their best.

This toolkit is a starting point. The real change happens when these conversations become continuous practice, woven into your culture.

Small steps add up: every conversation helps build a more inclusive workplace

Progress beats perfection: you don't need all the answers before you act

Inclusion spreads: when leaders model curiosity and care, it sets new norms

The results are worth it: healthier culture, higher retention, stronger performance – and a genuinely inclusive workplace where everyone thrives.



brain in hand can help you achieve more.

Brain in Hand brings neurodiversity coaching into everyday moments, supporting autistic and ADHD colleagues in the workplace. We extend coaching beyond scheduled sessions with on-demand personalised support when it matters most.

Our app delivers tailored strategies and human guidance, reducing anxiety and burnout while building confidence

Backed by research, our approach delivers proven results:

£4

return for every £1 spent

6%

improved retention

64%

better mental health

66%

increased workplace achievement

Talk to Brain in Hand today about achieving these results in your workplace.

Speak to our team to learn more:

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About our contributors



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Is Founder and Managing Partner of Thrive Law, a law firm that practices law differently and where people matter. Jodie is disrupting the legal sector, creating a uniquely positioned law firm that helps organisations get the very best from their people. Wellbeing, diversity, inclusion and belonging underpin Thrive's approach and advice. Jodie is neurodivergent and co-authored the Acas guidance around neuroinclusion. She can help with managing reasonable adjustments, legal advice, practical support, and neuroinclusion audits and training.

Devon Lowndes -

Is a specialist neurodiversity consultant and the Founder of Self Agency, a consultancy specialising in awareness, education and change around neurodiversity. She offers neurodiversity training and consultancy services to help pave new opportunities for every brain – because valuing and nurturing brains that process things differently leads to a more inclusive, creative and productive environment.



Gemma Loverock -

Leads the People team at Brain in Hand, bringing more than 15 years of HR experience across diverse industries and environments. She specialises in building inclusive cultures, leading change, and developing approaches to performance, engagement, and wellbeing that are supportive of all brains. She's passionate about creating workplaces where people feel safe, seen, and able to thrive.

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Keep reading

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The Neurodivergent Experience in the Workplace FAQs

With thanks to our panellists:
Jodie Hill
Founder & Managing Partner
at Thrive Law
Neil Basterfield
People & Culture Director UK & Ireland
at ODC Technology
Dr Louise Morpeth
CEO at Brain in Hand
Connor Ward
Neurodiversity Lead
at Brain in Hand

Following our webinar, we've put together a list of the most frequently asked questions with input from our panellists.

If you missed the webinar and would like to watch it on-demand, you can do so [here](#)

1. Do neurodivergent employees need a diagnosis for reasonable adjustments to be made?

No, employees do not need a formal diagnosis for reasonable adjustments to be considered. The duty to make adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 arises when the employer knows - or ought reasonably to know - that an employee has a disability. If someone is presenting challenges or requesting support linked to traits of a condition like autism or ADHD, adjustments can and should still be explored, even without a formal diagnosis. Employer should instead focus on the impact the

condition has their ability to carry out daily activities rather than seeking formal diagnosis before supporting them. Being person-centred and proactive helps create an inclusive culture and mitigate risk.

2. Is neurodivergence classified as a disability?

Neurodivergence itself is not automatically classified as a disability, but many neurodivergent conditions - such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia - can meet the legal definition of a disability under the Equality Act 2010. This depends on whether the condition has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Usually because neurodivergence has been present for the most of the life of the individual they're likely to satisfy the long-term elements to the focus should be on what the impact is on their ability to carry out daily activities which includes activities outside of the workplace and outside of their role.

2

brain in hand

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The Neurodivergent Experience in the Workplace

What it's like and how HR can support neuroinclusion