

Neuro Inclusion Checklist

Estates & Buildings



mark charlesworth

NEUR  TIDE

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Removing barriers &
empowering neurodivergence

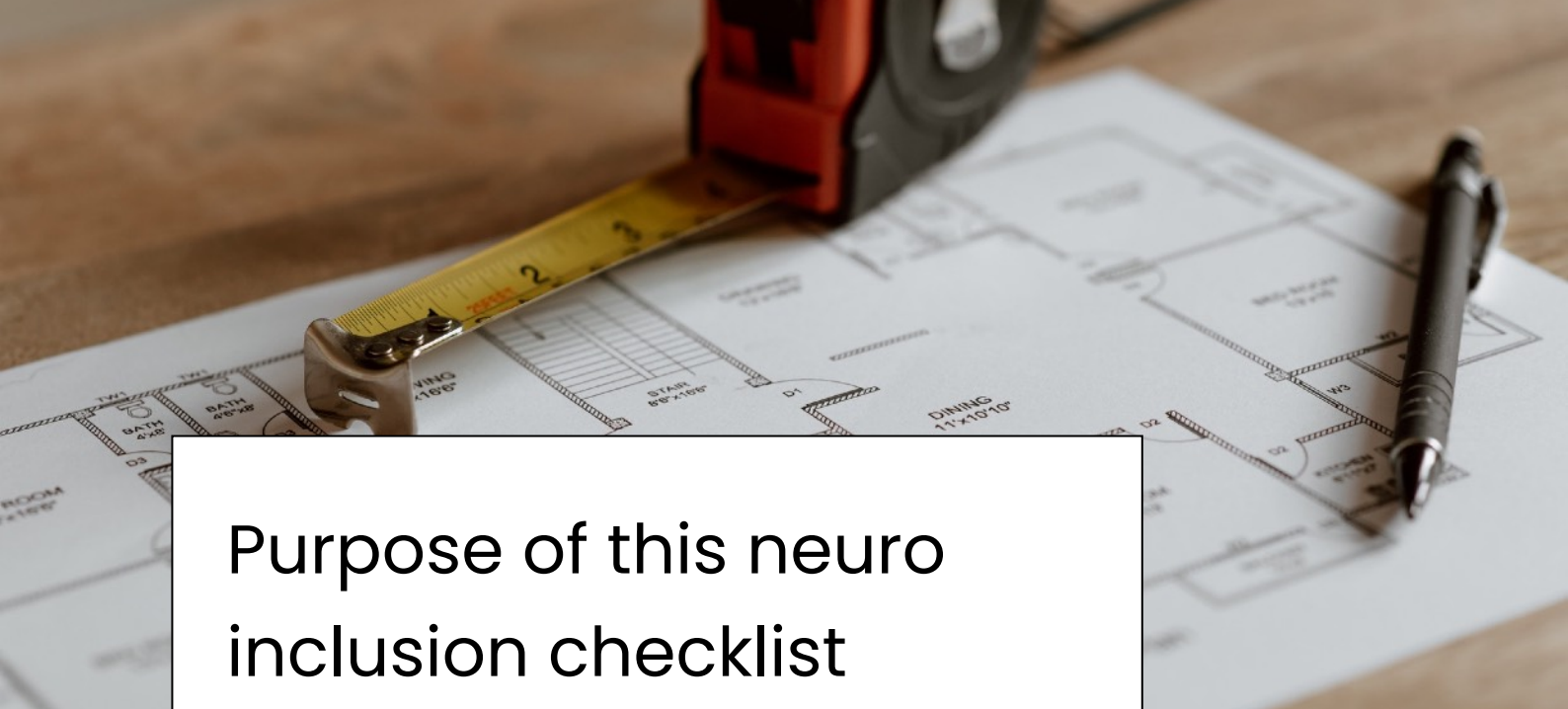
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Neuro Inclusion Checklist

Estates & Buildings

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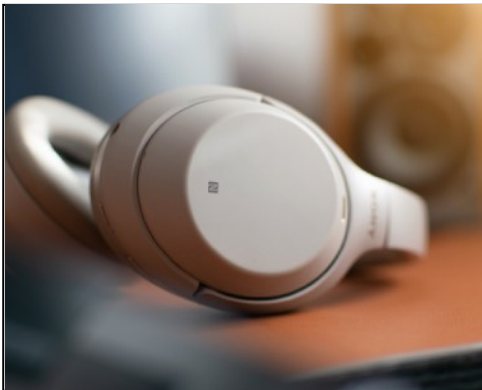
Purpose of this neuro inclusion checklist

In short, to help you in my absence have full and rounded consideration for all elements of your buildings and estate in respect of neurodivergent colleagues and other stakeholders.

This document is not a replacement for a full neurodiversity audit by an expert. Only a full neurodiversity audit in person carried out by Mark Charlesworth of the current situation will ensure a full detailed overview, and the same is true for any alterations you wish to make or a pre-build. Also if I am able to assess before you make any changes or commit contractually and financially to materials and services then I can help you ensure they are truly inclusive for neurodivergent colleagues and other stakeholders.

All guidance is subject to appropriate legislation and health and safety guidance.

A few key considerations



Sensory, hyper and hypo including light, sound, touch, smell, taste, sight, balance, body position awareness



Ease of movement for physical elements of neurodivergence, including fine motor skills and grip



Clarity of written information such as navigation, posters and instructions



Navigation and confirmation of current location



Focus of this neuro inclusion checklist

The physical elements of the buildings and estate within your organisation so you can enhance the inclusion of neurodivergent colleagues and other stakeholders.

Nothing about us without us.

This is really important because those who will benefit from change, or are at a detriment, are the best people to tell you how it affects them. Always check and fine tune with neurodivergent colleagues.

The spectrum of neurodiversity.

Each condition is multi-layered and each layer it's own spectrum, meaning that where one person is easily distracted by that element, another neurodiverse person will be less distracted, or have other difficulties and strengths, albeit with a core theme in the centre

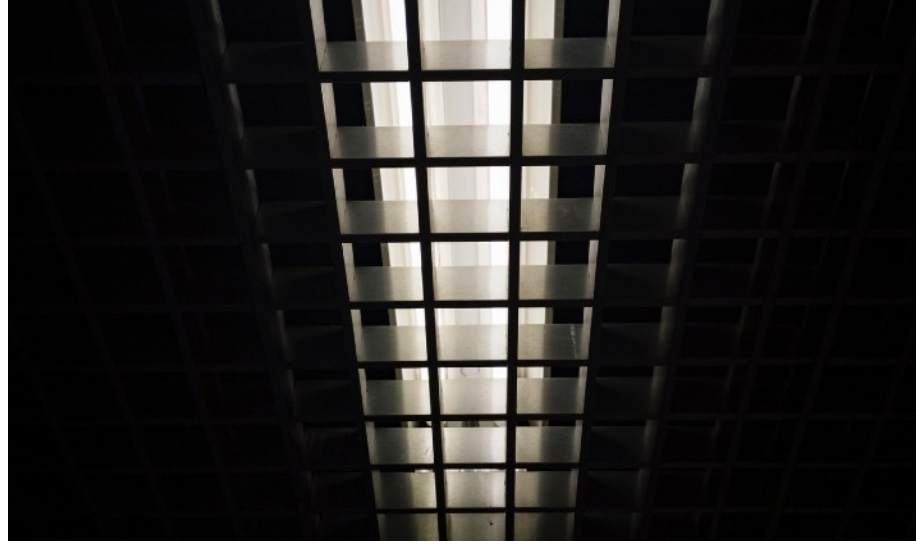
for diagnosis, but the presentation is slightly different.

Tailor expected changes.

This checklist is based on the general overview of neurodiversity but amendments will need to be made on an individual basis as required. Don't make sudden changes, share updates with autistic colleagues so they can expect what is happening and are less anxious.

Queuing and waiting.

It is very difficult for those with ADHD and / or Autism to wait so changes need to happen quickly, but not suddenly for autistic colleagues. Keep them informed.



01: Lighting

Whether it be accent, general, ambient or task lighting it is important to strike the balance between sight of hazards and overwhelming sensory input which causes psychological distress to neurodivergent colleagues.

Strip lighting has the potential to flicker causing distress and headaches for neurodivergent's using them so they need to be lights that don't flicker. The temperature of the bulb as well as the luminance needs to be considered too. Pure white or blue tinted lights can cause sensory overload. Therefore use warmer temperatures where possible. Reflection and glare occurs on white surfaces and certain wall and floor coverings, of course in addition to the reflection within screens. Whiteboards too are reflective and all these surfaces need to either be hidden when not in use or moved so they don't reflect or glare. In many cases a replacement material or item is the perfect solution. Install dimmer switches for zones.



02:Thermal Comfort

Air temperature, air velocity, radiant temperature, relative humidity, metabolic heat or activity, clothing and wellbeing and sickness all impact a person's thermal comfort.

Where a neurodivergent colleague feels uncomfortable, whether it be too warm, too cold or in a draught they will be distressed overwhelmed, distracted and unable to perform at their best and so the temperature and other readings of the person's work area should be taken before, during and after their shift to assess suitability and comfort.

Where these are inadequate then adjustments can be made, such as cooling or moving heat producing equipment, but also moving away from a ventilation duct where too cold, or redirect it.

Different people may feel differently about the same temperature and so there should be flexibility in temperature zones, or provide an ability to open and close windows, which have a quick affect.



03: Visual And Windows

If you can see it there is a high chance that a neurodivergent person is distracted by it.

Sunlight is a beautiful thing but not when you are becoming distracted by its glare and reflection, and over heating when working in its path.

The distracting elements through the windows too, a road, park, an airport are not always in your control but you can offer to move the layout around, and also install suitable vertical blinds. These are better than the 'all-or-nothing' roller blinds because of a greater flexibility and directional control, albeit with subtle lines.

Within a working area & outside there will be elements that visually distract. Inside its possible to screen these off, move around, ensure neutral colours etc. People that are walking past outside could be hidden by screening off the wall by making it opaque where currently translucent.



04: Open Plan Environments

Sensory overwhelming for neurodivergent colleagues and not neurodivergent inclusive.

In such an environment there is nowhere for the colleague to work away from the overwhelming nature of the state of being on show all the times to others which is psychologically distressing to many neurodivergent people.

Additionally there will be patterns, such as a pile of pallets which is distracting, or the clutter of notice boards, constant interruptions from people. Even when not when being interrupted, the number of people can be overwhelming, when added to the noise disruptions from telephones, keyboards, photocopiers, the lighting and so on.

The open plan environment has been found to be less inclusive and less productive than their counterparts and need to be separated into suitable units.



05: Olfactory

Neurodivergence includes for many a hyper awareness and distress from, aromas such as chemicals used to clean the office or warehouse, or it may be food that colleagues are eating.

Adequate extractor fans in kitchens can help with food as are blowers above doors to keeps the smells inside the kitchen. Auto closing doors will help here too. Ventilation throughout the working environment would provide assistance, increasing its rate at meal times. The ovens used can also waft aromas of burnt food and grease which is an additional distress, so a strict cleaning regime is key. Cleaning products are available that have a zero or low aroma level and this should be used in place of pungent chemicals. Ideally too only used later in the day.

Many organisations now allow animals in to their building but some neurodivergent people are sensitive to a clean well groomed dog, so ensure there is a space that is 'aroma free' for the neurodivergent colleague to work.



06: Tactile And Textures

Some textures cause distress whilst others are a comfort, but this is individual to the neurodivergent colleague.

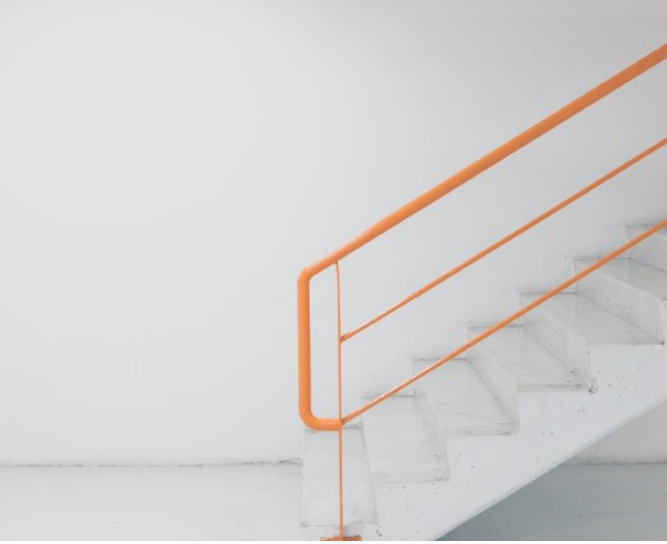
It varies from person to person, but neurodivergent people have a need to touch a particular texture, and get distressed by other materials, and visa versa, whether it be smooth, coarse, soft, firm etc.

Always have a choice of furniture with different materials to sit on, and offer a throw to use.

Door handles, rails, buttons are fixed but always engineer an alternative such as a metal handle but plastic button.

Many are hyper-sensitive the haptic feedback when selecting, pushing, turning, twisting a handle, button etc so provide support to help amend this as required until perfected.

Where possible have a metal rail on one-side and an alternative such as wood on the other.



07: Balance And Coordination

People with ADHD can sometimes stumble, but particular attention should be paid to Dyspraxia and the sensory balance and coordination difficulty sometimes associated with Autism Spectrum Condition sometimes referred to as proprioception.

Some neurodivergent colleagues need to ensure they have a clear path to navigate their way across a room or through a warehouse, and items are required to be placed along the route so that they can hold onto these objects, maybe a desk or shelving system (firmly screwed down), to help them to be and feel grounded. The thickness of the flooring needs to be as thin as possible, whilst of course absorbing all the noise of the person walking and others on the flooring. Patterns need to be avoided as does contrast between two carpet tiles, because this would cause disorientation and provide a sensory balance issue. A sense of distance and proximity needs to be maintained across the navigation.



08: Sound

Echos, constant interruptions from background noise, machines and that of the social interactions, the working environment is an overwhelming sensory overload, easily fixed by estates and buildings teams.

Open plan offices are a significant problem, but in all environments a decibel reading as well as the pitch frequency of the noise, such as a low rumble can be more distressing than people talking.

Sound absorption fittings and furniture should be explored as well as ensuring that sounds are not travelling through one room into the next, by installing sound proofing.

Quiet zones and quiet pods are essential installation requirements but their positioning should consider all sensory inputs.

The hum of machines may cause a sensory overload so put them in their own room, as well as photocopiers too, with a soft-closing door so minimise the talking, visual distractions and machine noises.



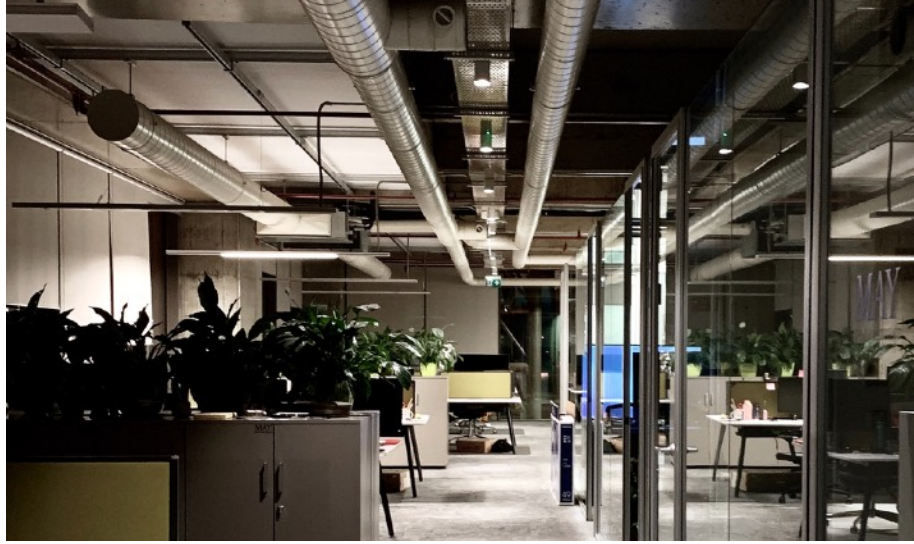
09: Workstation And Working Space

Being comfortable and engaged will reach full potential when the building has ensured all sensory and other neurodivergent considerations have been acted upon.

A colleague must have the flexibility to adjust for individual need, whether that be a desk, chair, the temperature etc. If they cannot then this becomes their main focus and distressing, being possibly unable to process their workload in a timely and safe manner. Once this distraction and other sensory issues are removed they can focus and concentrate safely, and without detriment to their wellbeing.

The distance to travel to access a quiet room when overwhelmed must be as short as possible, with barriers to its quick access removed.

Sensory matters are key as are the multiple number of steps in a process which ideally need to be reduced, to ensure engagement with an interaction.



10: Lines

Lines can catch your eye and lead you to focus on something else, so remove the lines where you can or consider covering them to remove the distraction.

When they catch your eye and lead you to another part of the room this creates a cycle of distraction for neurodivergent colleagues and whether in the ceiling or flooring, they need to be covered by a much less or preferably non-distracting element.

Lines can also be seen in the layout of desks, dividing walls/partitions, and other furniture, including gaps between, and a simple move around to re-work the layout will reduce the distracting elements for neurodivergent colleagues.

Never use wooden batons as a design feature where they leave significant gaps in-between, because this is a significant distraction, whether it be around a TV, a dividing partition or something else.



11: Colour, Patterns And Layout

Colours and the layout can define spaces in a room but the completed design must not be distracting for neurodivergent colleagues.

There is a psychological reason certain colours are used but for neurodivergents they can be distracting. The same can be said of stripes & patterns, where some add interest to a room or calm, but again, distracting for neurodivergents. Calming colours that blend with the rest of the room are a positive. Hidden to neurotypicals many patterns contain faces which Autistic colleagues will see but most others will not, these faces can distract and sometimes distress too. Where overpowering and distracting elements cause difficulties for neurodivergents the patterns etc need to be screened off or redesigned. For example a row of cupboards with 3 different coloured doors in a checkered layout need to have the doors swapped around to remove the distracting element.



12: Typography, Posters And Information

When asking neurodivergent people to read ensure you use the Dyslexia formula and ensure there is a clear action without nuance.

When there are too many signs, instructions and other elements to read, they can be easily missed, as well as when they are not 'framed' by clear space, and clearly visibly and able to be read.

On all temporary signs place a date of issue and expiry date so that it is clear they are relevant, and always check that they are, because when no-longer relevant they can cause conflict of decision and confusion.

All elements need to have clarity without nuance, ensuring you give a clear instruction rather than a capability question. e.g. when the lift is broken don't say "can you use the stairs", say instead "lift broken please use the stairs".

All written elements must have a high contrast between text and background, and be a sans font.



13: Scale, Dominance And Emphasis

Neurodivergent colleagues can become overwhelmed by the ambience of a room, its features, the large or small size, but all are easily resolved.

The scale or emphasis of a room can cause distress to a neurodivergent colleague, whether that be large or small, or particular features or ambience. Large means that they feel lost and unsure and are anxious being in the large open space, whereas if a room is too small for the use or furniture then it creates a feel of being overwhelmed and trapped, such also occurs with dominant features.

Is the dominant element distracting and off-putting, and if so all that is required is a screen, either temporary or permanent to remove the detriment for the neurodivergent colleague.



14: Navigation And Signage

A building is not inclusive if neurodivergent colleagues cannot find their way around, and confirm where they are. Don't forget to make-sure all signage is valid and up to date.

From the outside of the building it may probably be clear that it is your organisation, but where do you enter? Am I welcome to come in? Easily rectified with multiple sites of clear signage across the estate pointing to where you access the reception etc.

Once inside then for each floor, team, section etc as well as person needs there needs to be confirmation of where you are.

Always have repeater signage at key points because neurodivergent people need reminders, and also for assistance when they take a wrong turn.

When you stand at different zones they are on the surface very similar so why not call them different zones and colour them to assist with easy navigation.



15: Emergency

No secondary interpretations should be available from signage, and the icons used must have absolute instant clarity.

When using this signage the neurodivergent colleague will be potentially highly anxious, so signage needs to be visible within eye line as well as having clarity under such stressful situations.

An arrow always needs to tell people where to go, not just a sign above a door, people in these situations need quick navigational instructions without having to think and assess.

When feeling confident about where they are in the process of a safe exit then they will relax and get out of the building safely.

Once outside it is useful to have a fully enclosed comfort area where the neurodivergent person can go to get them away from the high number of colleagues and street sensory inputs.



16: Break Rooms And Kitchens

The purpose of this room is relaxation, and away from their work they are employed to do so where a neurodivergent colleague cannot relax, they are in fact excluded.

By its very nature the rooms will have strong food and drink aromas, but good ventilation will help the neurodivergent colleague to relax, where these smells are distressing.

The noise of kettles and microwaves can be reduced by having them in a small room away from the break-area, with a door that closes automatically, but of course a button to open.

Some rooms have televisions and radios so these need a separate area which contains the sound.

For those neurodivergent colleagues that aren't in the break-room, the aromas need to be contained too by blowers above the doors.

Must not be too bright, and must have sound absorption.



17: Toilets And Showers

Before a neurodivergent person can use the facilities they need to be able to find them and know they can go in, so signage must be clearly visible from multiple angles and places as well as having clarity for gender when in a rush. The 'buck & hind' wording and symbols examples are often confusing, as are many others.

Once in there they of course must be thermally comfortable and sensory matters considered, plus privacy for the user, enabling safety and security.

Good ventilation will assist in helping with olfactory matters as well as when it is too warm or humid, but the room still needs warmth.

Cleaning and drying hands are an essential for person and others hygiene, but hand dryers can be extremely distressing when in use for a person with auditory sensitivity, so the quieter the better but of course having paper towels as an option is much more inclusive.

Taps, soap dispensers, all keep changing with no instructions that are actually of use, so instruction signage needs to be reviewed.



18: Flooring

Whilst tempting to use patterns and colours to brighten up a room, these cause difficulties for neurodivergent colleagues so are to be avoided.

There is an increased noise level from hard flooring v carpeted floors installed which needs to be considered. Additionally the greater the thickness of the pile, whilst noise absorbent will cause balance issues for a number of neurodivergent colleagues.

Patterned carpets are to be avoided as are blocks of colour because this may cause a balance and co-ordination issue at each point where the colour changes to another.

Bright colours may also cause a sensory distraction so need to be hidden from workstations and where conversations and other areas of concentration and focus occur.



19: Quiet And Safe Spaces

Sensory overload will require a neurodivergent colleague to be able to have a space to decompress.

For those who may experience sensory overload there is an essential need for a room to be utilised for the purpose of relaxation and to decompress.

It is essential that these rooms are available at all times for neurodivergent colleagues, and don't get used at any other time for other purposes.

They must be quick and easy to access by those that need it, so not far away from where the person using it has a workstation.

The purpose of the room is to avoid the noise, people, aromas, lighting, workload etc they are trying to spend time away from and so this room must be designed with this in-mind.

Break-rooms do not meet the criteria required for a quiet safe space.

Neuro Inclusion Checklist

Estates & Buildings

	Yes	No
1: Is there adequate signage and confirmation to direct a neurodiverse person to this location?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2: Does the navigation signage and all posters and notices adhere to the Dyslexia formula?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3: Is the lighting comfortable i.e. no flicker, lux/fc, temp?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4: Are multiple dimmer switches installed to adjust part of the room as required?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5: Is the decibel reading within the auditory comfort range for a neurodivergent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6: Is the room providing adequate thermal comfort?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7: Is the colleague able to use the room / area / location without distraction or distress from sensory input including Auditory, Visual, Aroma, Touch, Olfactory, Taste, or too much input such as tasks and elements being overwhelming?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Neuro Inclusion Checklist

Estates & Buildings

	Yes	No
8: Is a neurodivergent colleague able to walk across the flooring without detriment to their balance or co-ordination?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9: Is a neurodivergent colleague able to escape quickly in an emergency on their own, i.e. is the emergency navigation fit for purpose for neurodivergent colleagues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10: Will a neurodivergent person feel overwhelmed by the room itself, size, space, features?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11: Can a neurodivergent colleague access & use all parts if they have fine motor deficits, such as using handles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12: Is a sensory positive room available and nearby for a neurodivergent colleague to use at anytime to decompress when they need to?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13: Have neurodivergent colleagues been given a named contact in the estates & building team to quickly contact and discuss needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Neuro Inclusion Checklist

Estates & Buildings

	Yes	No
14: Have the estates & building team received and understood suitable neurodiversity training, including refresher courses?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15: Do all colleagues know that they contact the estates & building team to discuss adjustments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16: Has the building or full estate received a neurodiversity audit in the previous 24 months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The dyslexia font formula

Ideal Fonts For Dyslexia

High contrast and plain background is important. Times New Roman and other serif fonts are unsuitable. Suitable sans serif fonts include:

Ariel	Comic Sans
Verdana	Tahoma
Century Gothic	Trebuchet
Calibri	Open Sans

Font size ideally 12-14, some people will request larger, with ideal letter spacing 35%.

Inter-word spacing: 3.5 times the inter-letter spacing. Larger line spacing 1.5/150%

Avoid underlining and italics. Use bold for emphasis instead

Avoid text in capital / uppercase because is less familiar and so harder to read

Heading & Paragraphs

Use font 20% larger than the normal text. For further emphasis use bold.

Add extra space around headings and paragraphs.

Ensure hyperlinks look different from headings and normal text.