

# Neuro Inclusion Considerations

## Recruitment & Talent Acquisition



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NEUR  TIDE

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# NEUR TIDE

Removing barriers &  
empowering neurodivergence

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# Neuro Inclusion Checklist

## Recruitment & Talent Acquisition

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## Purpose of this neuro inclusion checklist

In short, the purpose is to help you in my absence have full and rounded consideration for all elements of your recruitment and talent acquisition in respect of neurodivergent applicants.

This document is not a replacement for a full neuro inclusion audit by an expert. Only a full neuro inclusion 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 to any of the elements of recruitment and talent acquisition.

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

Neurodiverse conditions given consideration in writing this document are ADHD, ADD, Autism Spectrum Condition, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia.



# A few considerations for both the recruitment & talent acquisition processes

## **Clarity of expectations**

Both served and received

## **Acronyms**

Use full words, and use to help remember elements in a process etc

## **Misunderstandings occur when**

Clarity is not confirmed by all

## **Abstract and theory**

Autistic people have a difficulty with this so give real world examples

## **Deadlines and other timelines**

Make them clear and repeat

## **Literal interpretation**

Some, Autistic people experience this so avoid idioms & metaphors

## **Embed formatted elements**

Share pdf not word / pages etc

## **Flow and construction of wording**

If disjointed so will be the interpretation. Say what is to be discussed before explaining

## **Alternative formats**

Includes all. Video, audio, slideshows, pdfs



# A few considerations for both the recruitment & talent acquisition processes (Continued)

## **Hyphens**

Can be mis interpreted as a minus symbol so avoid

## **Titles And Headings**

Must be clear what the reader is about to read, or navigate past

## **Question style**

Closed is better than open

## **Question & answer length**

Keep to the point and short, but do include detail

## **Work trials and more**

This is where many neurodiverse people can shine

## **Sensory matters**

Neurodiverse people may be either hyper or hypo sensitive to touch, visual, auditory, aroma

## **Navigation**

On PDFs, websites, application forms all need page numbers & document name in footer, need to be clear buttons on websites

## **Dyslexia formula**

Is important across all communication mediums

## **Self analysis & open text**

Difficult for many neurodiverse applicants



# 1: Job descriptions & person specifications for the inclusion of neurodiverse applicants

Abstract and theory of course cause difficulties, so why not write them in a logical way such as a typical day or month etc. Clearly space out the paragraphs, making the sentences shorter rather than longer, minimising the information in each. To avoid the staccato effect take the reader on a journey, tell a story. This makes it more personable and therefore appealing, increasing the chances of a higher number of neurodiverse applicants applying in the first place. Only ask for absolute essentials rather than desirable, and avoid asking for unnecessary qualifications. These are a test of memory rather than a test of skills and ability, and the best candidate may lack the qualification, but be otherwise essential to your organisation.





# 1: Job descriptions & person specifications for the inclusion of neurodiverse applicants

(Continued)

The wording needs to be absent of what a neurodiverse person will find difficult or impossible without reasonable adjustments. Avoid asking for 'excellent timekeeping', 'great interpersonal skills', 'superb self management', 'able to take the initiative', 'sociable' and more because these are terms that exclude neurodiverse people. With the right approaches to tasks, equipment, and appropriate adjustments most neurodiverse people are very capable of most roles, but when seeing these phrases as a basis requirement then they will most likely not apply. Avoid metaphors & idioms & other language that has nuance, ensuring clarity in a logical order. Add a phrase such as 'we welcome the exploration of reasonable adjustments so all can thrive'.





# 1: Job descriptions & person specifications for the inclusion of neurodiverse applicants

(Continued)

Always ensure that the applicant can print the document because many need to have the information in print, in front of them, to be able to use highlighters etc to assist with the application method.

Alternative mediums including an audio file, video file as well as a slideshow will help explain to all what is expected, whilst also adding the human touch to the process, limiting the disconnection between neurodivergent applicant and your organisation.

Ensure that the job description, person specification and more are not one long piece of text by breaking up into short mini paragraphs with clearly defined separation.



## 2: Right person or best person

By asking for the 'best person' already there is a hierarchy which places neurodivergent applicants at a detriment. Without realising it, particularly those with ADHD and or Autism Spectrum Condition don't lie or blag, but rather just tell the truth. Whilst of course this is an asset, when neurotypical applicants lie or blag very quickly the neurodiverse person is less likely to be successful. Equally and sadly until very recently many adults have never received a diagnosis and therefore support during their school years, which has the affect of otherwise very intelligent people with lots of common sense don't achieve the qualification levels that reflect their true skills, abilities & knowledge. The 'right person' is more subjective & based on more than qualifications.



### 3: Job fairs and the inclusion of neurodiverse applicants

For many neurodiverse people job fairs are psychologically distressing because primarily of the sensory matters, social interaction and also off the cuff questioning that may come their way.

Where you organisation is attending a job fair, persuade the organiser to allow in neurodiverse ticket holders one hour before others, and have a secondary quiet hour later in the day too.

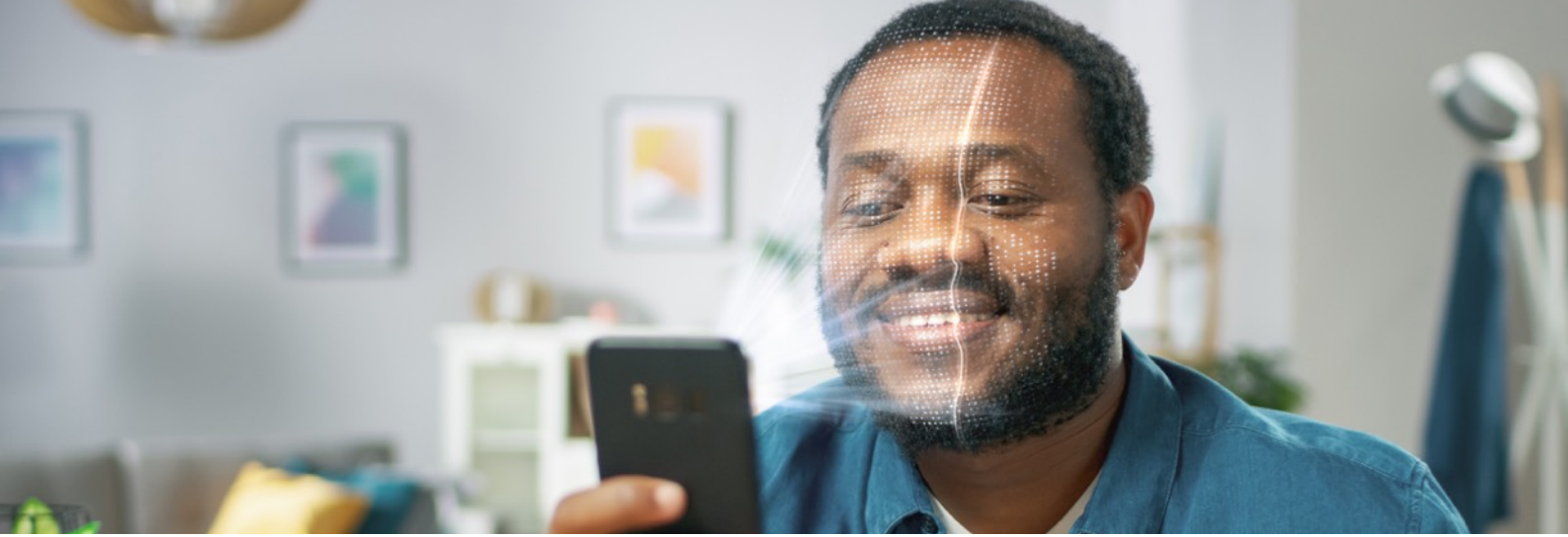
Large open spaces on their own cause anxiety and distress to many on the autistic spectrum so having the stallholders separated into random or specific smaller areas will help minimise visual and auditory distress, and so enhance inclusion for neurodivergent applicants.



## 4: Application forms, CVs and cover letter considerations to enable inclusion of neurodiverse applicants

Many of these documents requires self analysis and the answer to the question 'what do I have to offer?' Allow generic CVs and letters because although generic to you, it has been tailored to the neurodivergent person's job search and has taken a lot of effort. Asking a neurodiverse person to continually rewrite a document about themselves for each application is very difficult even for highly intelligent neurodivergent people. Always allow a CV in place of the preferred application method because this way at least they can show you what they have to offer in preparation for an interview or work trial. Blank open spaces on application forms are a difficulty for a neurodiverse person, so again, accept a CV instead.





## 5: Reference & ID considerations to enable inclusion of neurodiverse applicants

Many neurodiverse people have a very small social circle and as people pleasers who don't want to make a fuss, won't want to continually ask for references. Friends are relied upon for references because of the difficulty obtaining work and employers being accepting of their conditions. Many people who are neurodiverse don't drive, some have epilepsy, and so do not always have a driving licence. Additionally because of the disproportionate rate of unemployment of neurodiverse people, they are less likely too to be in possession of a passport. Careful thought needs to be given to the legislation in place and ensure that you are as flexible as possible to ensure inclusion.



## 6: Inclusion policies and procedures when including neurodiverse applicants

Neurodivergent people, subconsciously, underplay their conditions, and as people pleasers don't want to make a fuss. Equally the trust has to be a significantly high level to enable the sharing of their neurodiverse conditions. Across each step of the process their has to be an invite to discuss or share details about their ADHD, Aspergers etc, and you need to remind them it is a positive because you want to see them thrive, and will explore reasonable adjustments to help this. Don't just have this as the 'copy and paste policy' that is seen everywhere because when something is always there it then ignored. Also true in marketing, when a poster is refreshed people begin to pay attention after ignoring the one it replaced.



## 7: The first contact between your organisation and the neurodiverse applicant

It is extremely important to ensure that the communication methods are agreed between yourself and the neurodiverse applicant, and stick to what is agreed. When considering deadlines and agreed mediums that the deadlines are not breached, and also, when saying that a particular action will occur within a particular window, then ensure that window is as narrow as possible. Always ensure that the applicant has a named contact to enable questions to be answered and to update on matters. When contacting the neurodiverse applicant always introduce yourself and your job title, what in the process you are responsible for. Repeat later as required during the call, interview etc.





## 7: The first contact between your organisation and the neurodiverse applicant (Continued)

Be mindful that the neurodiverse applicant may be extremely nervous and be aware of the condition presentation where you can so that for example you can put the issue of spelling mistakes to one side for an applicant with Dyslexia, or see the positive element of honesty when viewing gaps on their CV. It is quite useful to be able to relax the neurodiverse applicant and so have a longer conversation about whatever it is that arises during a call or video interview. During a relaxed conversation you will learn much more than in a staged and scripted process so be prepared to go off topic and follow up with a call about something you missed, to clarify a fact.



## 8: CV and interview evaluation of the neurodiverse applicant

At no fault of the neurodiverse applicant they may have job hopped, or maybe not have not achieved a certificate of qualification to a particular level. Please bear in mind that firstly, the reason a person with a neurodivergent condition leaves an organisation is quite often because that particular employer is not open to exploring reasonable adjustments, and so making it very difficult for the applicant to just be themselves. Secondly, the lack of support historically for neurodiverse students was woeful so despite being very intelligent and capable, they were setup to fail based upon the test of memory to achieve a certificate rather than a demonstration of skills and ability.



## 8: CV and interview evaluation of the neurodiverse applicant (Continued)

The interview is an interpersonal skills test but skewed because of social compliance of politeness and so remaining quiet instead of being open. Make adjustments, never comparing to other candidates. A person on the Autism Spectrum may not give any eye contact, or may keep a gaze longer than is socially the norm, or perhaps present body postures which to a neurotypical person looks like they are not interested. Additionally they may not present any apparent emotion. It takes a lot for a person on the Autism Spectrum to apply for a job, let alone sit an interview due to the social and other anxieties, so it is highly likely that they are super keen and excited to be there, even when their outward emotions may not appear to show you this.



## 8: CV and interview evaluation of the neurodiverse applicant (Continued)

During the interview a person with ADHD may fidget, but not all, whilst others may find their working memory difficulties are presenting, so will find your questions difficult.

To enable a truly neuro inclusive interview always offer a number of room layouts which you have photographed so that a neurodiverse person can choose the best one for them before the date. Additionally it is always best to provide the questions you intend to ask in advance so that neurodiverse applicants can best prepare themselves. These and other questions need to be closed questions, with only small amounts of information in each. Don't forget to give case studies too in advance, and ensure you don't use the STAR technique.



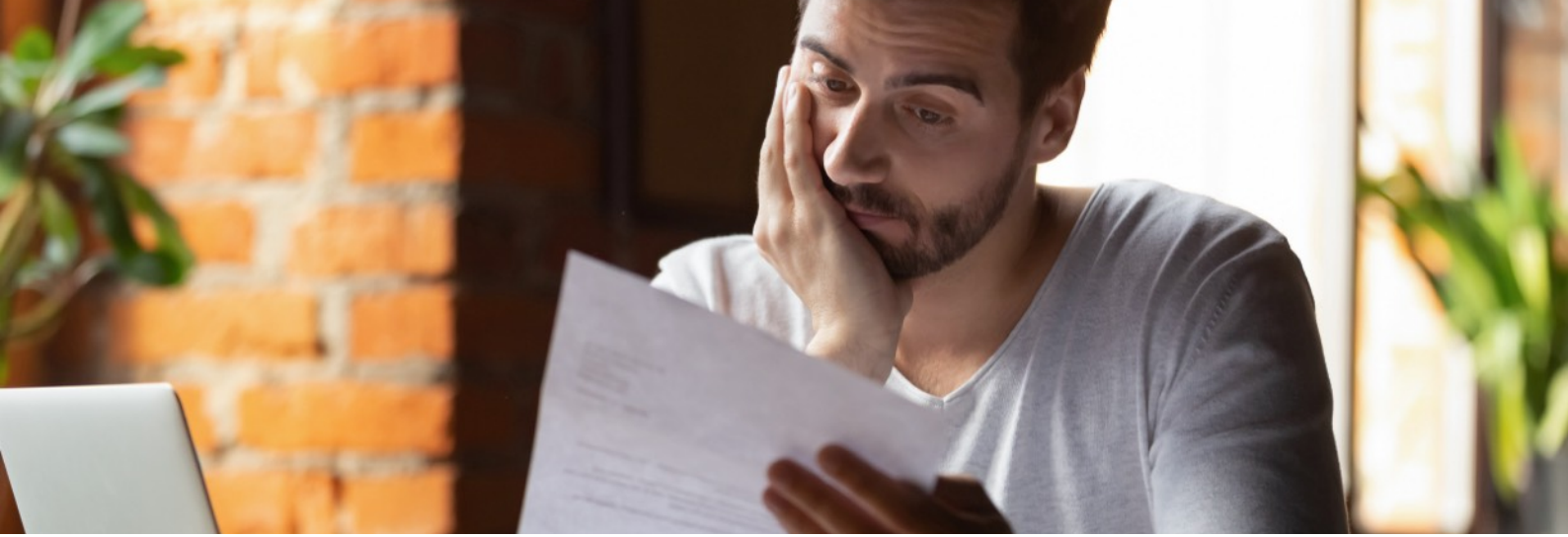
## 8: CV and interview evaluation of the neurodiverse applicant (Continued)

Rather than having a formal panel interview, sit in a less formal seating arrangement for neurodivergent applicants, such as circle as opposed to behind a desk.

The conversational approach enhances trust and build rapport which of course leads to more information being shared.

The interview and the CV are a research exercise for your organisation and are a marketing exercise for the applicant, but neither have effectively briefed the other on expectations and frameworks, so bear this in mind because here is where misalignment occurs. Don't judge a book by it's cover. Don't forget to provide notepads and pens, with a resting table if needed, especially for those with Dyspraxia.





## 9: Rejection of a neurodiverse applicant

Neurodiverse people are flexible and are OK with being rejected for a job, however please bear in mind how the rejection is delivered and with what tone. Set out clearly the expectations for the neurodiverse applicant using a flow chart of the recruitment process. Include how the neurodivergent person will hear them, agreeing a timeline, as short as possible, as well as the mediums. Ensure that you sandwich the rejection for the job between two positive notes of feedback, which many are open to hear but always double check. If a rejection is expected then it falls much more softly than if it is sudden and unexpected. Always invite them back for future interviews if they are suitable.



## 10: Alternatives to interviewing a neurodiverse applicant

As already mentioned, interviews are a theatre of social interaction, which are highly stressful for neurotypical applicants, let alone a neurodivergent applicant.

The interview process is not suitable for many neurodiverse people. The skills and abilities is where the excitement and show is so why not for example let an engineer show you her practical engineering skills rather telling or showing you on paper. Why not let a driver show you by driving, and the associated tasks such as setting up a tachograph and the satnav rather than telling you in an interview or on a CV.

Be creative, neurodiverse people are so why aren't you letting neurodiverse people thrive in sharing their skills and abilities?





## 11: Psychometric & personality tests when the applicant is neurodiverse

Highly unsuitable and discriminatory for neurodivergent applicants. For multiple reasons this is true but mainly because the test groups for these are neurotypicals, and not forgetting that many personality tests were developed, then neurology expanded its understanding and so they became unreliable even for neurotypicals. We are all capable of everything, achieving our own 100%. We just need to know our own limits so we can overcome them, either with confidence, equipment, training or something else. The psychometric and also personality tests are great if you are a test pilot but not really suitable for 99% of jobs in most organisations. By using them you are setting neurodiverse people up to fail even before they begin.



## 12: Knowing who to ask and when to ask when an applicant is neurodiverse

You won't always know who is neurodiverse but there may be clues already mentioned but always ensure that on every interaction, whether that be your general job page, your website, the job page itself, and all going forward, a neurodiverse applicant needs multiple invites to share details about their condition. Also they need to ensure trust, will they still be able to get that job? Your organisation holds the power in this relationship so transfer it by shouting loudly about the neurodiverse people you employ and how well they are doing and how much of an asset they are.



## 13: Knowing what to ask about a person's neurodiverse conditions

Offer all applicants adjustments for presentations, not just a conditions list, but actual difficulties such as spelling, working memory, etc and offer openness, adjustments, patience, understanding, and flexibility. By everybody that includes all applicants, even the neurotypicals. This ensures that no individual person feels isolated for attention. Additionally, subconsciously, neurodiverse people underplay their conditions and will often initially say everything is OK, when in fact it is not. Before engaging in such a conversation it is always best to have a couple of conversations beforehand so you can learn about the applicant as a research exercise to the conversation about their neurodivergence.





## 14: Inductions and training when a new starter is neurodivergent

Learning styles vary across the human spectrum and are proportionally representative when thinking about neurodiverse people. Always repeat and then summarise important facts, varying the presentation with audio, visual and text. Keep the text within a sentence short and to the point. Always provide the material in print so that the new starter can engage with the material at anytime throughout the day and beyond, and so they can concentrate on the speaker rather than having to take notes. Ensure lots of breaks throughout the day so that the brain stays active, because after one hour the ADHD loses interest so needs to break and restart. The pomodoro technique uses 25 minute segments with a 5 minute break which works well for many with an ADHD presentation.

# 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:

Arial	Comic Sans
Verdana	Tahoma
Century Gothic	Trebuchet
Calibri	Open Sans

Font size ideally 12 to 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.