

Architects' Neurodiversity Toolkit

Architects' Mental Wellbeing Forum

Published March '25

“

**Strength lies in differences,
not in similarities.”**

Stephen Covey

Contents

01	The Architects' Mental Wellbeing Forum	04
02	What is neurodiversity?	07
03	Actions for a neuro-inclusive workplace	12
04	Personal experiences	19
05	Workplace case study — RNIB	22
06	Resources and support	24

Foreword

In our role as architects and designers within the built environment, we strive to create inclusive and accessible places, buildings and spaces for all. As the technical author of '[PAS6463 Design for the Mind – Neurodiversity of the Built Environment 2022](#)'², I am, however, well aware that this British Standard document was only able to tackle the challenges from a place perspective. I am therefore especially pleased to have been asked to contribute to this toolkit and delighted to see such a succinct and helpful guide looking at neurological difference from a people perspective and how to make everyday challenges easier.

Neurodiversity is the natural and normal genetic variation in brain types across the population, and inevitably this means that there is not a one size fits all approach to how people function and thrive in the workplace. Our neuroprofile is often invisible, so you may not be aware that colleagues around you are struggling with everyday situations or environments.¹

I know that poorer mental health and anxiety conditions are commonplace for many neurodivergent people, and feel sure that using some of the easy suggestions in this guide will make a lot of difference to so many people. It's so important for mental wellbeing that neurodivergent people are able to be their authentic self at work, in the knowledge that respectful adjustments will be made and that appropriate support is there when needed.

Architecture, like many creative and science-based disciplines, attracts a higher proportion of people who are neurodivergent in some way. The development of this toolkit by the Architects' Mental Wellbeing Forum is timely and much needed.



Jean Hewitt

**Inclusive Environments
Technical Lead at Buro
Happold, and mental
health first aider**

PAS 6463, technical author

**UK Government Disability
and Access Ambassador
for the Built Environment**

1 - You can find out more about neurodiversity and sensory processing differences in section 02.

2 - PAS 6463 provides guidance on the design of the built environment for a neurodiverse society.

01

The Architects' Mental Wellbeing Forum

Welcome to the third toolkit produced by the Architects' Mental Wellbeing Forum (AMWF) focusing on neurodiversity and neuro-inclusion.

The AMWF, co-founded in 2017 by Ben Channon and John Assael, comprises a collective of proactive and forward-thinking architectural and built environment practices, supported by the Architects Benevolent Society (ABS) and RIBA, brought together with the shared aim of improving mental health and wellbeing across the industry.

Currently chaired by Grimshaw, the Forum meet regularly to share knowledge, best practice and discuss topics pertinent to the wellbeing of our industry and colleagues who practice within it.

Developed through ongoing dialogue between the practices and individuals involved, and through close collaboration with Jean Hewitt, the Architects' Neurodiversity Toolkit brings together lived experiences and good practice to help support neuro-inclusive environments for all working within the architectural profession.

Thank you to those individuals and practices who have contributed to the collaborative formulation of this toolkit, acknowledging, respecting and creating a platform to celebrate human difference and support positive change for all.

The AWMF team



Barr Gazetas

BURO HAPPOLD

GRIMSHAW

Hawkins\ Brown



Howells

Orms

KSR ARCHITECTS & INTERIOR DESIGNERS

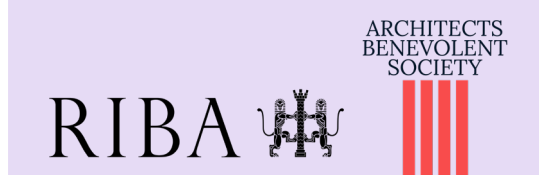
StudioPDP

ALLFORD HALL MONAGHAN MORRIS

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

MAKOWER ARCHITECTS

With support from:



compart. mentalise
organised space for a clearer mind

Introduction

This toolkit has been created to raise awareness and build understanding of the potential challenges experienced by some neurodivergent people and to highlight suggestions, ideas and strategies to support colleagues and foster inclusive workplaces and industry culture that benefits all.

The content continues the approach taken in the first successful and warmly received '[Architects' Mental Wellbeing Toolkit](#)', by providing accessible, step-by-step guidance for practices, managers, people directly affected and allies alike. The toolkits work well together and we would encourage people to look at both when supporting a neurodivergent colleague or seeking support yourself.

Challenges to mental wellbeing can be more likely for someone living with neurodivergent traits. This is unsurprising given the potential associated strain of working in unsuitable environments for their neurological needs, or potential communication and style difficulties working with colleagues who may think and process differently. Accommodating and supporting the diverse, and often dynamic, collection of neurological traits, challenges and strengths that we all bring as individuals will benefit everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

In terms of the built environment, the British Standards Institute '[PAS 6463:2022. Design for the Mind. Neurodiversity and the Built Environment](#)' is respected worldwide. Its expert steering group, with lived and professional experience of neurodivergence, developed the standard over a two year period with rigorous scrutiny and public consultation. The standard draws and builds on existing good practice standards and research undertaken specifically for this user group.

This toolkit uses PAS 6463 as a reference point, extending its place-based principles to practices and people. In application these principles have been successfully framed (by Buro Happold) as clarity, choice and calm - together giving back some individual control. Using this framework, which focuses on the individual, and applying this to the workplace, means we can move more confidently to an environment where everyone will feel able to be their authentic self at work, regardless of their neuro-profile, with the appropriate support and adjustments there when needed.

Neurodiversity in the UK population

15-20%

have a neurological difference

5%

have ADHD

1-2%

are Autistic

10%

are dyslexic

3-5%

are dyspraxic

1-2%

have Tourette syndrome

14%

have mental health needs

5%

have an acquired brain injury

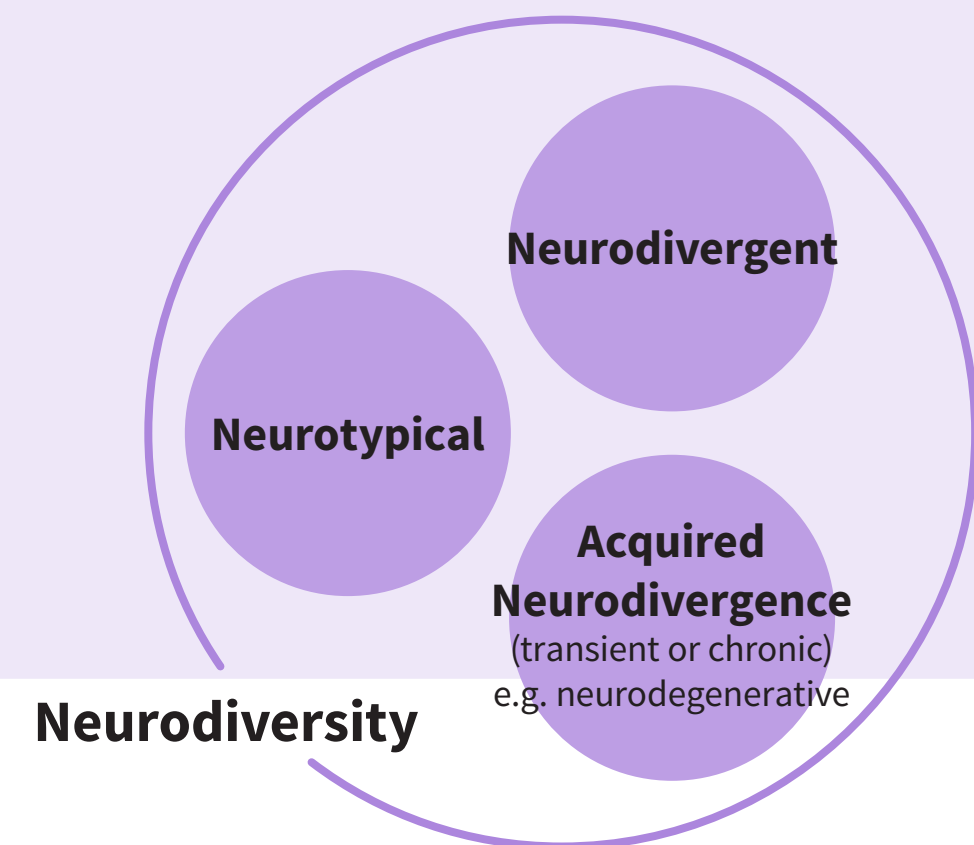
What is neurodiversity?

“

PAS 6463. Design for the Mind. Neurodiversity & the Built Environment

Neurodiversity is the term used to describe the variation in neurocognitive profiles across the whole population¹... It is not about one condition, difficulty or difference. The term recognises the variety in the way we speak, think, move, act and communicate; that human brains are diverse and vary.

Each one of us has a unique set of different connections with our billions of nerve cells. As a consequence, the way we interact with our environment can vary from person to person. It is dynamic and might change over time, for example, due to an incident such as brain injury, trauma, disease, stroke, an age-related condition or a change in mental wellness.



Neurological profiles can sometimes be collectively grouped as:

Neurotypical:

Someone fitting a majority neurological profile and is not neurodivergent;

Neurodivergent:

Someone who fits outside majority neurological profile and is commonly associated with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and Tourette Syndrome – there is no definitive list of conditions associated with neurodivergence; and

Neurodegenerative:

Where sensory processing differences develop over time through brain diseases, such as different forms of dementia or Parkinson's.

However, many people have not had their neurological profile formally assessed, or do not fall tidily into one group, such as sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) trait or highly sensitive person (HSP), learning disability and mental health difficulties and there is a very wide spectrum of how each individual is affected.

”

PAS 6463:2022

Design for the mind – Neurodiversity and the built environment – Guide



PAS 6463 provides guidance to the built environment on how to accommodate for neurodiverse needs.

It is believed to be the first standard that has been developed by a national standards body that provides built environment guidance for sensory processing differences and conditions.

It aims to help with the design, creation or management of intuitive environments which readily accommodate the neurological variations in the way people perceive, process and organise sensory information received through hearing, sight, touch, smell, taste or movement.

1 - This clarification is made in acknowledgement that the term neurodiversity has been strongly associated with particular neurodivergent conditions, such as autism spectrum condition (ASC).

We are all unique

Neurodiversity encompasses a broad spectrum of neurological differences and every experience of neurodivergence will be unique to each individual. Neuro-inclusion benefits everyone - recognising, respecting and celebrating our differences, embedding difference as standard and creating equitable workplaces for neurocognitive differences.

It is crucial to understand that no one can be defined or understood by one single identifier: each of us are made up of unique qualities that come together to form who we are.

We are all unique. This should be celebrated.

We should recognise, understand and respect individual differences.

We should avoid assumptions, generalisations, or stereotypes based on someone's neurodivergent status.

Providing tailored support

Whether self-identified or formally diagnosed, it is the effect, not the cause, of an individual's neurological needs that matter.

An individual's neurodivergence may meet the definition of disability under the [Equality Act 2010](#)¹, even if they do not consider themselves to be disabled. It is important for employers to understand their obligations under the Equality Act 2010, particularly in relation to reasonable adjustments, to prevent disability discrimination, even if a formal diagnosis is not provided.

To ensure they remain supportive and effective these reasonable adjustments should:

- Focus on the individual's specific needs and challenges experienced.
- Be developed through conversation and collaboration between the individual and their employer.
- Be continually reviewed as needed with the individual.



1 - Where a sensory difference has a substantial impact on day-to-day basis, it is very likely that the individual will meet the definition of Disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

The benefits of a neuro-inclusive workplace

Being allies to our neurodivergent colleagues is an essential part of creating accessible, supportive environments that value and empower individuals with varying cognitive styles and sensory processing differences.

Each of us can play a role in creating a workplace where neurodiversity is not just acknowledged but celebrated, fostering a neuro-inclusive culture where everyone can thrive and bring their authentic selves to work.

Providing equitable opportunities and outcomes for all types of thinkers, irrespective of their neuro-profile, benefits individuals, teams and organisations alike. The benefits of a neuro-inclusive workplace include:

Equity in the workplace leads to more inclusive built environments

An equitable, diverse and inclusive profession is more representative of, and better able to understand and address the needs of, the communities we serve.

Broadening our client base and winning work

Successfully communicating with, aligning values and reflecting what is important to our prospective clients increases the likelihood of winning new and repeat work and referrals.

Enhancing creativity and innovation

Greater diversity of thought and perspectives within our teams results in more creative, innovative and inclusive design outcomes.

Improving problem solving and decision making

Neuro-inclusive teams are better equipped to address complex challenges and make informed decisions by bringing together diverse cognitive styles and problem solving approaches.

Creating better overall management practices

Many of the accommodations that support neurodivergent colleagues can also benefit management practices for the entire team.

Allowing everyone to flourish

Flexible, supportive workplaces that foster a culture of inclusion and psychological safety allow individuals to be their full authentic self and thrive in their role.

Improving health and wellbeing

Neuro-inclusive workplaces boost wellbeing for neurodivergent colleagues, with many of the strategies behind this likely to be appreciated by all.

Increasing motivation and engagement

When colleagues feel accepted and valued for their unique strengths and differences, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated and satisfied with their job/role.

Attracting and retaining diverse talent

Starting at the point of recruitment, a supportive, neuro-inclusive workplace can attract and increase retention of diverse talent as colleagues feel a greater connection to their work and are less likely to experience burnout or disengagement.

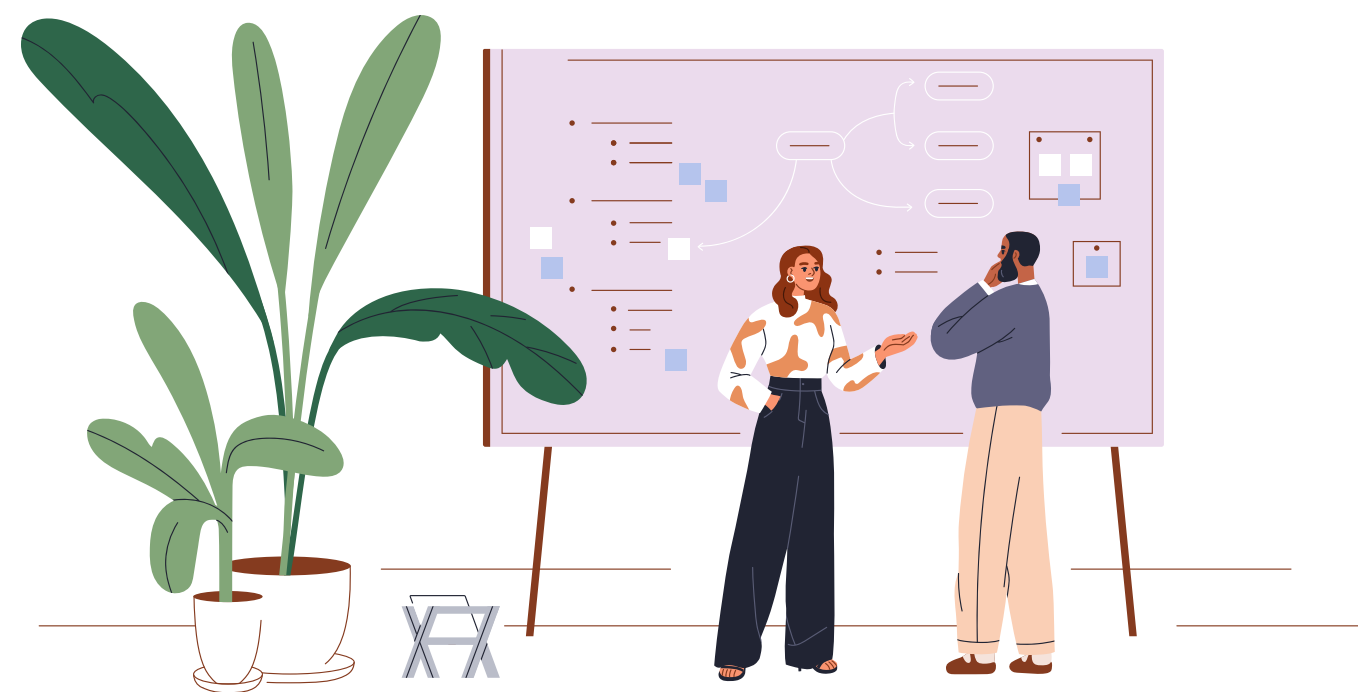
Terminology

Language changes over time and terminology preferences may differ from person to person.

For the purposes of this toolkit we have referred to the terminology adopted by [PAS 6463](#) which was subject to widespread consultation and engagement.

It is important to respect individual preferences about language and terminology. The social model adopts an identity first (not difference first) approach. Many people will therefore describe themselves as an autistic person rather than someone with autism for example.

When deciding on terminology and language in your practice, it can be helpful to engage with your neurodivergent colleagues about your approach, explaining the terms you intend to use and why they have been chosen, acknowledging that some may prefer different terminology.



Neurodivergent¹

Brain cognitive profile that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards (i.e. neurotypical).

Note This can also be referred to as atypical sensory processing or neurominority. Neurodiverse is incorrectly used by some people.

Neurodiversity¹

All types of ways humans think, move, process and act.

Note Therefore collectively includes all groups termed as neurotypical, neurodivergent or neurodegenerative.

Neurotypical¹

Dominant types of neurocognitive function.

Neurotype, Neurominority²

The terms neurominority / neurodivergent / neurodistinct can be used to refer to less typical neurotypes. For example ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and Tourette syndrome.

We also recognise that any neurocognitive profile that is not neurotypical could be included as a minority group. This might include intellectual disabilities, mental health conditions, acquired brain injuries or more.

Building a neuro-inclusive workplace

03

Actions for a neuro-inclusive workplace



Practice

- Educate, train and share knowledge amongst colleagues, managers, and the wider profession.
- Identify a champion to spearhead neuroinclusion and build a support system e.g. a neurodiversity network.
- Understand the importance, and support the implementation, of reasonable adjustments: focusing on individual needs not diagnoses.
- Use neuro-affirming language and take a person-centred, strengths based approach e.g. matching colleagues to their natural strengths.
- Be aware of your legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010¹ relating to disability.

Place

- Create an adaptive physical workspace: that promotes flexibility and choice.
- Support sensory friendly environments: to ensure accessibility for people who experience sensory sensitivity or overload.
- Accommodate workplace flexibility: synchronising working patterns with peak productivity times and recovery breaks, to mitigate the risk of exhaustion or burnout.

People

- Understand what neurodiversity is.
- Acknowledge challenges neurodivergent colleagues might face: e.g. information processing, sensory sensitivities, organisation, communication, coordination and navigation.
- Encourage, and provide a platform for, open conversations and sharing lived experiences.
- Be kind, patient and understanding: a supportive culture will encourage everyone to bring their best, authentic selves to work.

1 - Where a sensory difference has a substantial impact on day-to-day basis, it is very likely that the individual will meet the definition of Disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

Practice: recruitment

Simple changes across the recruitment process – as with other aspects of neuro-inclusion – can benefit everyone. The recruitment process is an opportunity to establish a trusted relationship from the outset.

Hiring

Application process

- Strategically review application processes to ensure inclusivity.
- Use clear, concise job descriptions that avoid jargon.
- Ensure job descriptions are available in accessible formats e.g. audio/video.
- Differentiate between 'must have' and 'nice to have' skills and experience.
- Include a diversity and inclusion statement in the job description stating you are happy to discuss reasonable adjustments.
- Highlight neurodiversity within the diversity/recruitment areas of your practice's website.

Interviews

In advance:

- Offer adjustments for the interview such as longer interview times.
- Explain how to access the interview location with visual cues/photos.
- Outline what to expect in the interview: it's length and format, standard questions, who they will meet e.g. profiles of interviewers.

On the day:

- Chose a suitable, quiet place free from distractions.
- Be aware of the bias of first impressions.
- Ensure interviewers are empathetic and well-informed e.g. neuro-inclusive interview training.
- Ask direct, specific questions.

Onboarding

Preparation

- Consider a workspace preferences questionnaire.
- Have adjustments, such as equipment and software, set up before starting.

Communication

- Ensure onboarding information is clear and comprehensive.
- Share information in advance if possible.
- Offer a variety of formats that can also be referred back to at a later date.

Identify what is/is not easy to access

Signposting and clear labelling, with a focus on orientation and guides as to where and who to go to when individuals need something.

Unwritten rules, expectations and practices

Highlighting aspects of your organisation's culture and conventions e.g. conventional times for breaks, typical communication channels etc.

Workplace buddy

Pairing new starters with a buddy to help build new relationships, provide insights and develop comfort around a new environment, practices and role.

Organisation structure

Provide an understanding of the organisational structure and where everyone fits in e.g. an organogram.

Practice: reasonable adjustments

Recognising that a working style is not necessarily a working preference, reasonable adjustments and accommodations can increase an individual's comfort, confidence and level of self-reliance. Work towards a vision where accommodations are available without request or the need to self-disclose.

Environments

- Opportunity to work from home.
- Choice, flexibility and adaptability.
- Undertaking an environment sensitivity checklist.
- Having a designated desk.
- Solo working spaces/quiet rooms.
- Noise cancelling headphones.

Hours

- Flexible hours to accommodate different needs.
- Focusing on task-based completion.
- Accommodating extra breaks to help manage stress and maintain productivity.
- Allowing flexibility in break times to manage energy levels.

Assistive technologies

- Text-to-speech and speech-to-text technologies.
- Time management apps.
- Mind mapping software.
- Live captions and effortless note taking apps.
- AI based task tools e.g. [Goblin Tools](#), Notion.
- Training and support for use of technologies.

Communication

- Asking about communication preferences and how instructions are given. Ensuring two-way communication is achieved at agreed intervals.
- Providing a choice of communication formats, both written and verbal.
- Using clear and concise communication.
- Considering the message, format, delivery and pace of communication.
- Limiting last minute changes to plans or arrangements.

Support

- Coaching.
- Extra one-to-one catch-ups and check-ins with manager.
- Mentoring.
- Support worker, shadowing.

Meetings

- Choice of camera on/off.
- Offering alternatives e.g. update via one-to-one.
- Providing agendas in advance and following up with a bullet point summaries and key actions.
- Avoiding impromptu meetings where possible and being explicit about why you are meeting to minimise anxiety.
- Considering meeting size and numbers in attendance.
- Building in breaks and avoiding back-to-back meetings/accommodating a 10min window between meetings.
- Meeting reminders to help with time blindness e.g. meeting buddy.

Place: physical workspaces

[PAS 6463](#) provides useful guidance on how to accommodate for neurodiverse needs within the design, creation or management of neurodivergent inclusive environments, including sensory needs, from lighting and acoustics to thermal comfort and wayfinding.

Adaptations

Flexibility

A variety of adaptive working environments that offer flexibility, choice, and the ability to move between different types of spaces can make a significant difference.

Environment sensitivity checklist

If individuals have particular needs, run through a sensitivity checklist with the workspace they will be using.

Adapt comfort to individuals

Ask and understand how individuals require different environments to work effectively to allow everyone to thrive in the workplace.



Sensory friendly environments

Sight

Adjustable or dimmable lighting, clear lighting (see [PAS 6463](#)) and de-cluttering accessories can help to limit overwhelming environments and allow for compartmentalisation.

Sound

Allocating distinct spaces for quiet work, louder meetings, individual and group work. Noise cancelling headphones, earbuds/earplugs can help reduce background noise and distractions. Access to quieter spaces for lunch/breaks.

Touch

Ergonomic chairs, adjustable desks, whiteboards. Pieces of equipment which allow for adjustment and tactile feedback allow individuals to choose how they exist in their space. Make fidget tools available.

Smell

Limiting overwhelming scents such as strongly scented air fresheners and considering the proximity of kitchens and WC locations to working areas.

Comfort

Incorporating interspersed sit/stand desks throughout the office may benefit those who value movement whilst thinking. Having a variety of high-traffic and low-traffic spaces. Thermal comfort should be considered.

People: self-support strategies

Some potential suggestions for how thrive in the right environment, noting that what works well for some might not work so well for others. It is important to develop personalised strategies and build up an arsenal of tools that work best for you.

Time management

- Map activities and tasks on a calendar.
- Use timers/alarms e.g. pomodoro timer.
- Give yourself more time than you think you might need.
- Develop a routine.
- Utilise the [Outlook feature](#) to end meetings five minutes early.
- Have a meeting buddy to help with time blindness.

Organisation

- Use visual aids and organisers e.g. to-do lists, colour coded calendars.
- Use a prioritisation matrix to sequence your tasks e.g. Eisenhower Matrix.
- Learn and plan around your energy/concentration peaks and troughs e.g. undertake complex, taxing challenges when you're at your best.
- Ask for reminders of deadlines and regular reviews of priorities/tasks.
- Utilise templates e.g. for reports and presentations.

Focus and attention

- Utilise 'Do not disturb' and switch off notifications - checking at regular intervals between tasks instead.
- Schedule in regular movement breaks, utilise fidget/stimming devices.
- Focus on one task at a time rather than multitasking.
- A timed playlist can be helpful for concentration e.g. classical music, binaural beats, focus music, soundscapes, brown noise.
- Alternate computer work with other tasks and consider changing your environment between tasks.

Getting things done

- Break things down into smaller, manageable tasks.
- Consolidate similar tasks to process them in a bulk effort.
- Take a break before transitioning to a new task.
- It can be helpful to do an easier task when energy is low.

Memory

- Echo/play-back instructions.
- Handwrite/digitise notes and thoughts.
- Use diagrams and flowcharts.
- Make notes of points you want to cover before a meeting or call.
- Ask if meetings can be recorded, where possible, so you can revisit them.

Self-advocacy

- Understand your strengths and challenges e.g. finding your spikey profile.
- Communicate your needs.
- Seek accommodations, consider discussing with your manager/HR.

Learning, community and wellbeing

- Build a support network with others who share similar experiences.
- Seek out training opportunities that align with your interests and goals.
- Be aware of your own warning signs that you have experienced before and take remedial action early rather than trying to struggle on.
- Practice self-care and look after your wellbeing, particularly focusing on pillars of sleep, sunlight, nutrition, exercise and social connectedness - [AMWF Mental Wellbeing Toolkit](#).

The Eisenhower Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Do: Tasks with deadlines or consequences	Schedule: Tasks with unclear deadlines that contribute to long-term success
Not Important	Delegate: Tasks that must get done but don't require your specific skill set	Delete: Distractions and unnecessary tasks

People: tips for people managers

Neuro-inclusive, people-centric management styles and assistance offered is likely to benefit the whole team. Communication is key. Setting clear expectations, providing regular feedback and addressing concerns in a timely manner help create a supportive environment.

Being supportive

Engage, learn and upskill

Dedicate time to attend neurodiversity training/events beyond awareness days.

Vocalise recognition of neurodiversity

Create a safe environment where open communication, conversation and discussion of challenges is encouraged to help reinforce a culture of support.

Listen

Listen with intent to build understanding. Ask questions about an individual's experiences, challenges and support needs. Avoid biases and assumptions.

Flexibility

Recognise that one size doesn't fit all.

Psychological safety

Build psychological safety where ideas are welcomed from everyone and colleagues feel able to speak up without fear of negative consequences.

Checking-in

Schedule regular check-ins

Planned one-to-ones that are structured and consistent. Offer the option to meet outside of the office environment e.g. a familiar local spot or on a walk.

Be sensitive and open-minded

Present yourself in a way that is approachable, trustworthy and empathetic. Be mindful of where someone is on their journey.

Understand the signs

Identify early warning signs of burnout and poor mental health. Understand individual triggers, and encourage a healthy work-life balance.

Setting tasks and projects

Communicate clearly and consistently

Be specific with instructions, expectations and deadlines and follow up with bullet points. Provide meeting agendas in advance and email action points.

Provide the wider context

Set tasks against wider priorities, milestones, roles and responsibilities.

Support time management of tasks and projects

Set realistic timeframes to complete tasks. Provide helpful techniques to meet deadlines. Communicate any changes with as much notice as possible.

Understand that everyone works differently

Facilitate rather than micro-manage. Ask individuals what works best for them.

Nurturing professional growth and development

Take a strengths based approach

Match individuals to their natural strengths and adopt a neuro-affirming approach. Don't look at differences from a deficit perspective e.g. challenges with team working, -> excellent at independent working.

Adapt roles for individual success

Craft roles that better align with an individual's skills and personal interests.

Give specific and fact driven feedback

Provide a regular pattern of structured feedback that also allows opportunities for individuals to feed back to managers.

Set clear goals

Make short, medium and long-term goals clear.

Personal experiences and case studies

Personal experiences

"Learning to accept that I am neurodivergent and moving forward with the capacity to ask for help."

My journey started in the middle of my master's course. My usual prompts of mental health issues began: a sense of imposter syndrome, feelings of inadequacy, and a deep fear of failure.

In the past, pressure had pushed me to achieve what I wanted, whilst also leaving me with a feeling that I kept getting away with it. Imposter syndrome created huge issues with my self-worth.

The pressures of a master's course took their toll. My reliance on looming deadlines was no longer working - I had reached a level in which consistency was required. A huge amount of anxiety had set in, along with thoughts of escapism. I took week-long breaks from my course, unable to pick up the work I was so passionate about. I communicated with my tutors when I could, but the worry of rejection and misunderstanding fuelled a desire for distance.

At the start of 2023 I was diagnosed with Inattentive ADHD, in which distractibility and lack of directed focus were key symptoms. I was given a reason as to why I had struggled all these years, and understood what aspects of myself I could focus on.

I had waited for confirmation through the NHS, but the lack of funding for mental health and disabilities has meant a two-year backlog is present throughout the country. A review with a psychiatrist through my university allowed me to achieve a diagnosis – a service they started that year, and I will always be thankful for.

I had assumed a diagnosis would wipe the slate clean. Instead, it brought with it anger around what position I could be in, had I picked up on the symptoms sooner. Masking my symptoms had led me to hide facets of myself from everyone around me, and not knowing what help I really needed. I had been described as a closed book, and had not understood why that made me feel so awful.

This feeling of frustration, through a lot of help, turned to empathy for myself. Despite my undiagnosed mental disability, I am still on the road to becoming an architect.

My journey with mental health is still ongoing, but a large chapter feels resolved - learning to accept that I am neurodivergent and moving forward with the capacity to ask for help, rather than assume I am failing because I am looking for assistance from others.

There are always people out there that want to help. Friends, family, and professionals. Neurodiversity is now something I strive to understand and support. We need to be able to see the benefits of those who think differently, and normalise asking for support so we can become our best selves. No person should suffer in silence, confused about why they are feeling a certain way.

Anyone can achieve what they want to. Our perceived drawbacks are always the things that allow us to see the world in a unique way.



**Architectural
Assistant**

London

Personal experiences

"Being neurodivergent has become both a challenge and an asset."

My neurodivergent mind shapes my architectural practice in unique ways. Out-of-the-box thinking isn't merely a trait - it's how my brain functions, compelling me to ask questions, recognise hidden connections and patterns, and focus on the finest details. I view design as a puzzle to be solved in a neat and fun way.

My sensory profile influences how I approach the environmental aspects of building design. I endeavour to create inclusive spaces with carefully considered lighting and acoustics to accommodate diverse needs.

Navigating the professional landscape presents challenges - from overwhelming open-plan offices and ubiquitous small talk to unwritten rules and complex team dynamics - but these experiences have strengthened my advocacy for meaningful inclusion.

Being neurodivergent has become both a challenge and an asset. It enables me to maintain a unique perspective and bring a systematic, focused approach to my work, although I may be less adaptable and resilient than is sometimes expected.

Ultimately, I believe in creating a built environment and a profession where everyone can thrive, regardless of how their brains or senses work.

Architect
London



Personal experiences

"I refused to give institutions power to decide what my identity is."

My experience as a neurodivergent has been an intersectional one. The implications of this were a lot of misleading communications and presumptions made about myself and my identity. One doesn't need a diagnosis to identify as neurodivergent and as a neurodivergent one doesn't necessarily need to identify as disabled. This is why by the end of my master's I was devastated, I never saw myself as disabled and I lost a sense of secured identity. Society and in particular social exclusion were disabling me. No adjustments could help me because what truly impacted me was bullying. I had no awareness whatsoever of what a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) was and I refused to give institutions power to decide what my identity is. People's needs should be met without the need for institutions to collect personal information about an individual and honest conversation needs to happen independently of labels.

Fast forward to four years later and I have completed a second masters and earned a few prizes for collaboration with teams outside of architecture. Cross-disciplinary has become a thing for me now. I have also put forward a petition to make neurodiversity its own protected characteristic within the Equality Act. I have proposed intersectional provisions within the Act. How different protected characteristics interlink with each other and create further complex cases of discrimination is not explained or demonstrated in most policies and not even within the Equality Act. There is still a lot of work to be done but I am hopeful that the future is bright for us neurodivergent folk.

Building adjustments can help but will not replace positive social interactions. It is natural that not everything that works is labelled with neurodiversity, sometimes things work because people care and ultimately a truly accessible built environment is occupied by people who possess awareness of their own and each other's needs.

**Architectural
Assistant,
Part II Graduate**
London



Workplace case study — RNIB

In 2022, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) relocated to the Grimaldi Building in Kings Cross, with the goal of it's London head quarters serving as a 'beacon of accessibility'.

With the help of Buro Happold Inclusive Environments, lighting and acoustics specialists, and Kay Elliot architects, the charity embraced the principles of PAS 6463 Designing for Neurodiversity, applying innovative interventions for their staff and visitors with sight loss and achieving the BS8300 good practice guidelines for general accessibility.

Click the link below to find out more about this award-winning refurbishment project which demonstrates that design principles for neurodiversity can be applied to any project at any stage.

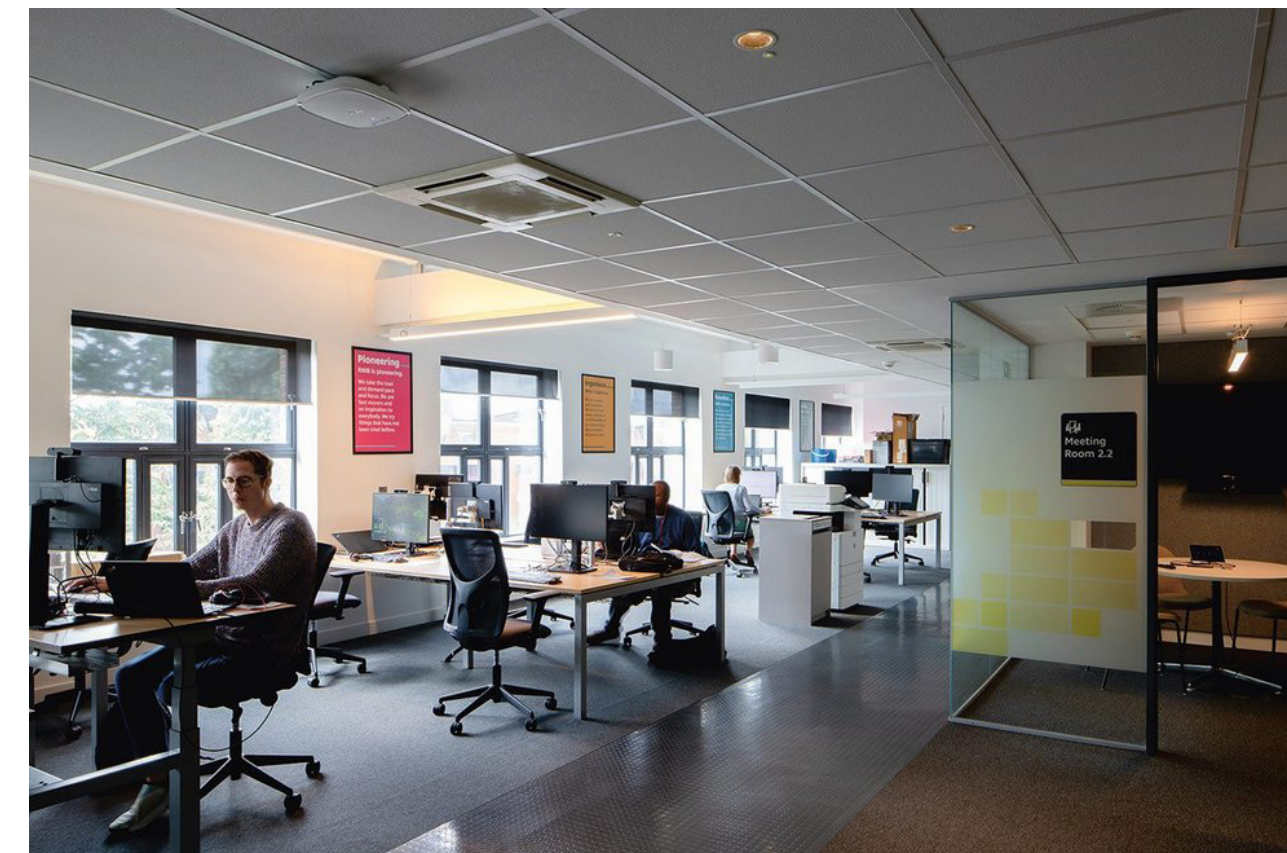


[Find out more here](#)



The waiting and reception area at ground level.

Image: Buro Happold.



Flare paths guide users along circulation routes and make tactile distinctions between this and office areas.

Image: Buro Happold.

Resources and support

Resources and support

We hope that you have found this AMWF Neurodiversity Toolkit useful. We would welcome thoughts, input and further references from the profession so that we can improve and update the guidance over time.

If you would like to get in touch with us, please visit www.amwf.co.uk



[Access to Work](#) | Funding practical support at work

[Neurodiversity Architecture Network](#) | Peer network

[ARB Workplace Culture Report](#) | November 2024

Useful websites

- [National Autistic Society](#)
- [Asperger London Area Group](#)
- [Autism Hub](#)
- [Resources for Autism](#)
- [British Dyslexia Association](#)
- [Mind: ADHD and Mental Health, Autism and Mental Health](#)

Publications and podcasts

- [Neurodiversity at Work](#)
- [PAS 6463. Design for the Mind. Neurodiversity & the Build Environment.](#)

Coaching and training services

- [Thriving Autistic](#)
- [Lexxic](#)
- [Genius Within](#)
- [No Drama Llamas](#)

