



Insights Pack

“Being an Ally to Neurodivergent Colleagues”

Diversity Coffee Connect Series
6th May 2025



How to use this pack

- ▶ Use this pack as part of your reflective practice, relating to your leadership development.
- ▶ Reflect on the session theme; using the **Our Focus** page to:
 - ▶ Ask yourself the **questions offered for consideration**
 - ▶ Choose one or more **blogs or resources** offered to help you reflect on the questions
- ▶ Read the **Enablers and Opportunities word-cloud** and **Call to Action** page to explore the themes, ideas, comments and take away points from the participants who attended the live event

Finally ask yourself:

- ▶ What have I learned from this experience, in the moment and now?
- ▶ What one thing will I do differently going forward?
- ▶ How can I commit to the actions I identified?

About Diversity Coffee Connect

Watch our 2 min animation on the aim and purpose of this programme

**Have you heard
about our
Diversity Coffee
Connect
programme?**



- ▶ Watch the video [here](#).

Our focus



As part of our [Allyship Hub](#) and [toolkit](#), in this session we invited attendees to explore how to be an ally to neurodivergent colleagues, highlighting stories, insights and good practice.

We heard from Helen Sikora, Specialist Lead in the NHS Education for Scotland Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Team, who shared some insights and perspectives from neurodivergent colleagues and some suggestions about how we can be better allies.

Reflective questions

- Introduce yourselves and what brought you here today.
- Share one thing you may wish to **start / stop / continue doing** to be an active ally to neurodiverse colleagues.
- Explore and reflect on the ideas shared in your group.

Resources offered for consideration



20-30 minute podcasts: [NES Equality and diversity: Stories for change podcast | NHS Education for Scotland](#)



Explore: [Leading to Change Allyship Hub](#)



Explore: [Disability and neurodiversity | Turas | Learn](#)



Read: [GMB Neurodiversity in the Workplace Toolkit](#)



Explore: [Neurodiversity Celebration Week 2025 | BASW](#)

Terminology and Neurodiversity

Diversity: difference across a whole group

Neurodiversity: includes every person

Neurodivergent: brain that diverges from a majority

People-first language vs identity-first language

Some UK statistics

1 in 7 individuals have a neurodifference / are neurodivergent

Around 600,000 autistic adults

Only 22% of autistic adults are in full time employment

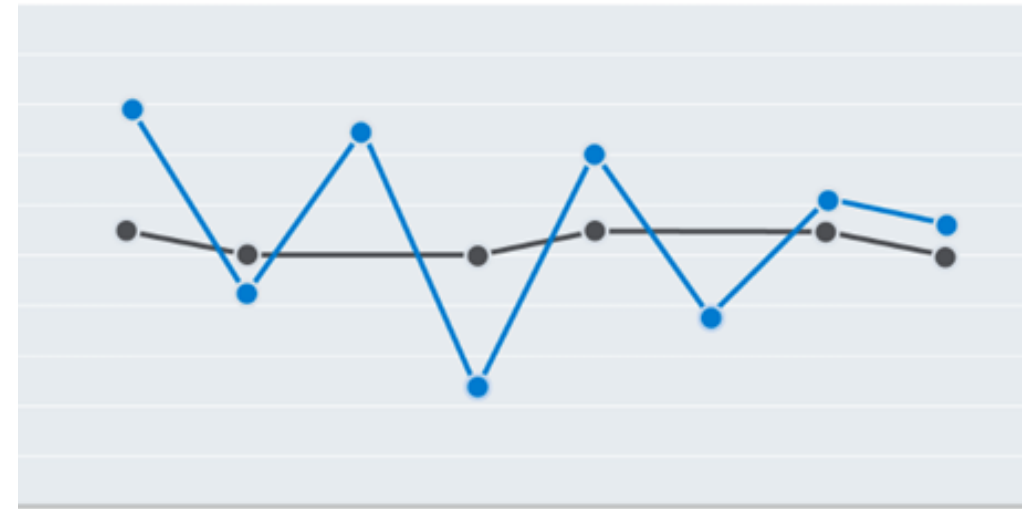
10% of the UK population has Dyslexia

Approximately 2.6 million adults have ADHD but only around 600,000 are formally diagnosed

Most neurodivergent people have at least two different neurodiverse conditions

The 'Spiky Profile'

- The chart demonstrates a person's strengths in different areas.
- A person who isn't neurodivergent will have a relatively stable and consistent profile, shown by the black line in the chart.
- A neurodivergent person will likely have much larger deviations, resulting in the 'spiky profile' shown by the blue line.



Neurodiversity and allyship



Colleagues can perform better if they can be themselves and ask for the adjustments they need, and that treating people fairly is not the same as treating people the same.



Allies can use their role and influence to create a workplace culture that is safe and inclusive and supports colleagues through words, behaviour and examples.



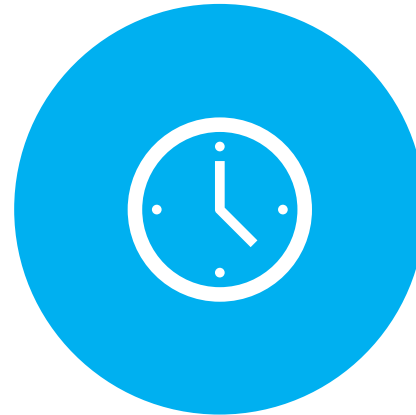
Whether a senior executive or the most junior person in a team, it is about sharing their belief that it takes all of us to create a workplace culture that is inclusive of everyone.

Group discussions

We invited our community to explore what this means for us, and what practical learning we can take away using breakout groups to enable real conversations and connections.



16 BREAKOUT ROOMS



TIME IN BREAK OUT
ROOM: **15 MINUTES**



EVENT DURATION: **60
MINUTES**

Call to action (I)

We collectively identified over 134 actions and insights, relating to 'one thing we can do' following our session. Here are some of the themes!

Adapt systems,
not people

Person-centred
approaches

Use the spiky profile to
start conversations.

Value and
support
people

Address different
learning needs

Play to people's strengths

Promote
flexibility

Kindness,
listening,
integration.

Communication is key: listen to understand

Stop
assumptions

Consider a "stay well at work" or "what matters to me" plan for all employees from the start.

Call to action (II)

We collectively identified over 134 actions and insights, relating to 'one thing we can do' following our session. Here are some of the themes!

Think about the language we use

Compassion and lack of judgement/othering

Autonomy

HR and Leadership need to understand neurodiversity.

Consistency

Who holds the power?

Human Factors

Everyone is different – do you need a label?

Workplace Adjustment Passports?

No one size fits all

Normalise adjustments

Empathy and understanding

Support throughout the full journey, from candidate to employee

Additional resources

In this section we are attaching a few additional resources we referred to during the session.

This includes:

- Factsheets on ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia
- The NES 'What Matters to Me' template
- [Neurodivergent Affirming Language Guide](#)

“What Matters To Me” – a template for communicating preferences.

Conditions I like to work in

The times/hours I like to work

The best way to communicate with me

Things I need

Things I struggle with

Things I love

How I like to receive feedback

Other things to know about me



Neurodiversity – the facts!

ADHD

ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) is a condition that affects a person's concentration and activity levels. There is no lack of attention, more a difficulty in regulating attention. Hyperactivity is also not present in all cases. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) divides ADHD into three types:

- Predominantly inattentive (20-30%) – often described as 'daydreamers.'
- Predominantly hyperactive-impulsive (15%) – often impulsive and 'on the go.'
- Combined (50-75%) – a mixture of both

The UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) estimates that ADHD affects 3-4% of adults in the UK.

Common strengths:

- Empathy
- Ability to hyperfocus (this can also be a challenge especially when changing to a different task)
- Creativity
- Problem-solving
- Visual reasoning skills
- Communication skills
- Adaptability – for example, often excel in emergency work
- Spontaneity
- Energy
- Resilience and tenacity.

Find out more: [What is neurodiversity? - Business Disability Forum](#)
[ADHD UK - Homepage - ADHD UK](#) | [Home - ADHD Foundation : ADHD Foundation](#)

Neurodiversity – the facts!

Autism

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a condition that affects how a person behaves, communicates and interacts with others. It is a condition people are born with. Most autistic people are diagnosed in childhood, but many don't realise they are autistic until later in life. Every autistic person is an individual with unique experiences.

Autism can affect how people:

- Communicate and interact with other people
- Understand how other people are feeling or thinking
- Experience sensory stimuli such as light, sound and touch
- Interpret information
- Feel in unfamiliar situations or routines
- Behave – such as repeating the same actions

Common strengths:

- Empathy
- Attention to detail
- Strong adherence to processes/procedures
- Extensive and passionate knowledge of specialist subjects
- Strong work ethic
- Honesty and loyalty
- Visual perception
- Creativity
- Fairness and social justice

Find out more:

[What is neurodiversity? - Business Disability Forum](#)

[What is autism – National Autistic Society](#)

[What is autism? | Scottish Autism](#)

Neurodiversity – the facts!

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a condition that affects a person's ability to read and write. It can also affect working memory and organisational skills. It does not affect a person's intelligence. There is no universally accepted definition of dyslexia. However, it is generally understood to cause:

- Difficulty reading quickly and accurately
- Difficulty writing and spelling words correctly
- Difficulties with organisation and time management

It is estimated that 10-15% of the global population is dyslexic. It often runs in families and some research has suggested a genetic link. Dyslexia is present in all ages, genders, social classes, race, and intelligence levels.

Common strengths:

- Big picture thinking
- Seeing links and similarities
- Problem-solving and gap analysis
- Visual processing and thinking styles
- Empathy
- Communication skills
- Creativity
- Resilience and tenacity
- Spotting ambiguities
- Maths

Find out more:

[What is neurodiversity? - Business Disability Forum](#)

[Dyslexia Scotland - Empowering people with dyslexia to reach their full potential](#)

[British Dyslexia Association](#)

Neurodiversity – the facts!

Dyspraxia or developmental coordination disorder (DCD)

Dyspraxia is a condition that affects movement and co-ordination. It can affect the gross and/or fine movements. People with dyspraxia can find it harder to perform tasks that require dexterity, physical coordination or balance. Around 5-10% of the population have dyspraxia.

Common strengths:

- Problem-solving
- Creativity
- Original and strategic thinking
- Resilience and tenacity
- Empathy.

Find out more: [What is neurodiversity? - Business Disability Forum](#)

Potential impact on work:

Every person with dyspraxia experiences it differently. Many people with dyspraxia have developed coping mechanisms, so you may not even notice.

- May take longer to complete physical tasks that require co-ordination or balance.
- May get tired more easily and need more frequent breaks.
- May take longer to learn new skills or remember new information.
- Handwriting may seem 'messier' – or take longer to complete.
- May struggle to prioritise tasks and keep track of what they need to do.
- May miss deadlines and be late for meetings.

Neurodiversity – the facts!

Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is a persistent difficulty in the understanding of numbers and maths concepts. It is often described as having 'poor number sense'. It affects the parts of the brain that deal with numbers and reasoning. It is estimated that between 4-6% of people have dyscalculia. This is likely to be an underestimation due to the lack of recognition and research into it until recently. There is also a strong overlap with other neurodiverse conditions. As with all the neurodiversity labels, it affects people of all ages and abilities regardless of level of education and intelligence.

Common strengths:

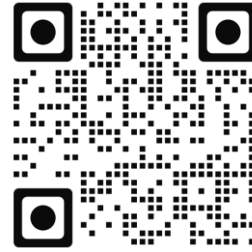
- Big picture thinking
- Strategic thinking
- Problem-solving
- Language-related tasks
- Creativity

Potential impact on work:

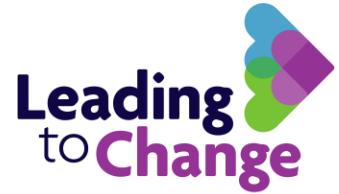
- Calculating time for schedules and projects
- Understanding spreadsheets, graphs and charts
- Finances – budgeting, working out tips, expense forms
- Basic calculations – adding up total costs, converting minutes into hours or days, fractions, working out medicine doses and times
- Measuring – especially if changing having to work out different amounts, such as doubling or halving a recipe
- Working out alternative ways to solve maths problems
- Understanding maths equations and formulae such as algebra.

Find out more: [What is neurodiversity? - Business Disability Forum](#)

Moving forward



Scan for
events



▶ Tell us more hello@leadingtochange.scot

- ▶ How did you use this Insights pack? What was useful or what would you like to see?
- ▶ We would love to hear your ideas for potential topics and contributors
- ▶ Do you have thoughts and learning to share? Would you like to write a blog or know someone who could? Our team can fully support you with this.

▶ To find out more, please explore

- ▶ [Our Equalities page](#) – links and resources in relation to our Diversity Coffee Connect Series, the Allyship Hub, Leadership blogs and more.
- ▶ [Our many leadership, sector and programme resources](#) available to read, watch and engage with from internal and external sources

- ▶ We hope to see you again soon at one of our [next events](#) – scan the QR code above to find out more



Leading to Change: What's on Offer



Website



App (incl My Learning)



Does Compassionate Leadership Actually Matter?

This month we move from leadership fundamentals to the often misunderstood topic of **Compassionate Leadership**. There is a bit of a 'marmite' reaction when the phrase is mentioned; some love the idea, endorse the topic, believe it is the key to culture change and others see it as irrelevant, not practical enough...

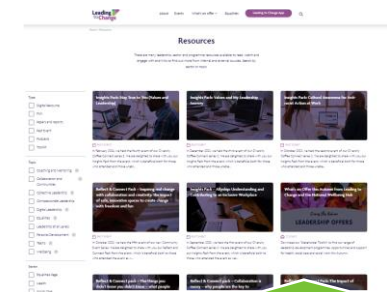
Leadership 'Friday Emails'



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Thank You!

