

Reasonable Adjustments In the Workplace

The most appropriate reasonable adjustments you can make as an employer, manager, colleague or friend is to invite your neurodivergent colleague to talk to you about the difficulties that they have (as they see them) and then discuss together the possible solution.

Many anticipate that reasonable adjustments are going to be costly and difficult to implement, in most cases the opposite is actually true. Many people with dyslexia require little in the way of support beyond the acceptance that they will need to approach some tasks differently.

As the severity of dyslexia varies so to, does the strategies that may help those overcome challenges in employment. The majority of these are inexpensive and uncomplicated. However, should additional costs be incurred, for example, voice activated software or a reader; the employer can however apply for funding through the Government's Access to Work scheme. It is important to work collaboratively with your neurodiverse colleagues, celebrate talents and strengths and remember that the attitude and culture of your organisation is vital!

Communication

- Give both verbal and written instructions wherever possible.
- Highlight salient points in documents.
- Provide information on pastel coloured paper.
- Allow time for reading information and for it to sink in.
- Use flow charts and mind maps where possible.
- Use pod casts and other recorded options.
- Use Ariel or Sans Serif font, point size 12.
- Use two coloured pens when writing on a flip chart/whiteboard.

Instructions

- Endeavour to give instructions one at a time wherever possible and chunk up thoughts and ideas.
- Keep verbal information simple and concise.
- Demonstrate more complex tasks and allow time to reflect and ask questions.
- Encourage active listening, repeating and paraphrasing information back to you and work together to summarise thoughts.
- Write down any plans of action as well as verbalising them.
- Where multiple instructions cannot be avoided, use mind mapping or diagrams.

- Do not 'hint' or 'imply' or make assumptions, wherever possible communicate in a clear unambiguous way.

Time and Work Planning

- Ensure that your colleague feels able to take mini breaks when working on the computer.
- Provide a workspace where there are few distractions.
- Encourage use of a work plan to help colleagues prioritise their work.
- Encourage use of wall planners, diaries, outlook, mobile phones (in line with company policies and GDPR)
- Prompts/alarms can be used as reminders of meetings and deadlines.
- For important meetings text or phone colleagues prior to the meeting with a gentle reminder.
- Create daily, dated, to do lists.
- Build planning time into each day.
- Allow time for unforeseen occurrences and 'positive procrastination'.

Organisation

- Keep work areas neat and tidy – a place for everything and everything in its place.
- Colour code items.
- Use numeric or date filing systems instead of alphabetic.
- Explore usage of Apps and mobile phone to organise to do lists and thoughts.

Written Work

- Provide spell checker software for PC, explore free facilities from Microsoft 365.
- Change background colour of screen to enhance readability.
- Provide screen reader to assist with proof reading own work and comprehension of complex documents.
- Provide a digital tape recorder to record meetings and important information and preparation for presentations, consider devising a policy around usage of recording devices.
- Provide voice activated software to assist with monitoring of own work and increase speed of report writing and other long documents.
- Consider creating a buddy system, whereby a colleague could act as a proof reader and 'go-to' person for certain issues.

Reading

- Consider changing communications in line with BDA Style Guide, such as background colour and font styles.
- Provide screen readers to improve comprehension.
- Provide a pen reader for reading single word or sentence when away from PC.
- Provide coloured reading ruler or scanning pen for small amounts of text away from PC.
- Highlight, embolden, box important text in documents.
- Provide a summary/overview for long documents.

Directional difficulties

- Provide satellite navigation system in car.
- Always give a map with written details of how to get to destination.
- Allow extra time for getting from 'A to B'.

Workplace Culture

- Co-ordinate effective diversity groups.
- A Disability Forum where ALL disabilities are discussed.
- Celebrate difference!
- Encourage disability awareness wherever possible including dyslexia awareness training for senior management.
- Cascade this learning to line managers and staff.

Recruitment

- Explore wording on application forms, could you be inadvertently deterring neurodivergent applicants from joining your organisation?
- Where application forms are used offer applicants the opportunity to have a different format – e.g. a list of questions to answer with CV and covering letter.
- Avoid psychometric testing – where unavoidable offer candidates the opportunity to complete this alone in a quiet room and if the candidate disclosed their dyslexia, give them additional time.
- Give candidates a list of questions that they will be asked at interview.

Appraisal

- Conduct one-to-one meetings in an informal environment.
- Allow the individual to verbally report their self-assessment.
- Allow the individual to use a digital recorder during the meeting so that they can replay after the meeting to ensure that they heard and understood everything.

- Encourage the individual to make their own notes in a style that suits them best – mind maps for example.
- Always provide a copy of the notes taken to the individual.
- Give plenty of advance warning for a formal appraisal.
- Allow the individual to be accompanied by another member of staff to act as note taker and another pair of ears.