

Acas publishes new advice to raise awareness of neurodiversity at work

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Workplace expert, Acas, has published new advice on neurodiversity to help employers create inclusive organisations and raise awareness at work.

Neurodiversity describes the natural differences in how people's brains behave and process information. Some well-known types of neurodiversity include:

- ADHD – stands for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and affects people's behaviour
- autism – sometimes called a spectrum condition and affects how people communicate and interact with the world
- dyslexia – mostly affects reading and writing skills and is sometimes referred to as a learning difficulty
- dyspraxia – affects movement and co-ordination

A lot of neurodivergent people do not see themselves as disabled but will often be considered as having a disability under the Equality Act.

Acas Head of Inclusive Workplaces, Julie Dennis, said:

"Employees may not want to tell people that they are neurodivergent or may mask their condition due to concerns about a negative reaction at work.

"Bosses also need to be aware that the strengths and challenges that come with a neurodivergent condition may not be the same for everyone.

"Our new advice has tips for employers on how to raise awareness, be inclusive, sensitive, and stay within the law when managing neurodiversity at work."

Minister for Social Security and Disability, Sir Stephen Timms, said:

"Having conversations about health conditions and adjustments is the first step to fostering a healthy workplace, which is good for employers and employees.

"This new guidance will be an important keystone to promote neurodiversity employment and will help workers and their bosses best support each other."

The Equality Act gives disabled employees protection against discrimination and the right to reasonable adjustments at work. A reasonable adjustment is a change that an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability.

Acas ran its own poll on neurodiversity with 1,650 line managers in November last year. It asked about the barriers to making a reasonable adjustment for neurodiverse employees. The barriers identified by respondents included:

- over 7 seven out of 10 (72%) said employees not disclosing the need for a reasonable adjustment
- lack of organisational knowledge about neurodiversity was reported by 45%
- 39% said it was due to line managers finding it difficult to have the conversation

Acas advice is that employers should make their organisation more inclusive, so that staff feel comfortable sharing and talking about neurodiversity.

Raising awareness can help normalise it, which can help ensure employees get the support they need. Being inclusive can help:

- improve staff wellbeing
- reduce absence levels and employee turnover
- attract employees with a wider range of skills and experience
- reduce the risk of disputes and legal claims on discrimination

Acas has some top tips for employers on raising awareness of neurodiversity at work, such as:

- include it in their organisation's mandatory training
- run awareness days and campaigns
- encourage senior employees to act as role models
- set up a staff network for neurodiversity
- cover the topic in induction materials

Acas's full advice has information about:

- various different types of neurodiversity and their common traits
- how the Equality Act 2010 applies to neurodiverse employees
- how to support people, raise awareness and approach it sensitively at work

[Find out more about neurodiversity at work](#)

Media enquiries

[Contact the Acas press office](#)

Background notes

Acas sent a survey in November 2024 to employers that were subscribed to its mailing list, which asked them about neurodiversity and reasonable adjustments.

1,650 line managers took part in the poll. 62% of respondents were from small and medium enterprises and 36% were from large organisations. 45% of all the respondents were from private organisations, 23% from the public sector and 26% were from charitable and social enterprises.

Respondents were asked: what barriers have you found to making a reasonable adjustment for a neurodivergent employee in your organisation? (Please select all that apply). The results were:

- lack of organisational knowledge about neurodiversity – 45%
- lack of knowledge among line managers about how to make a reasonable adjustment for a neurodivergent employee – 59%
- line managers find it difficult to have a conversation about reasonable adjustments with a neurodivergent employee – 39%

- neurodivergent employees do not disclose that they need a reasonable adjustment – 72%
- complex or unclear internal processes – 22%
- cost – 19%
- time needed – 25%
- other – 9%
- none or no barrier – 3%
- don't know or not sure – 3%