

Neurodiversity and Exploitation



What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population.

Neurotypical is when a person's strengths and challenges aren't affected by any kind of difference that changes how their brain works (this term is mainly used by autistic people).

Neurodivergent is a non-medical term that describes people whose brain develops or works differently for some reason. This means that the person has different strengths and struggles from people whose brains develop or work more typically.

SEND – A child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities if they have a learning difficulty and/or a disability that means that they need special health and education support.



Autism

[Video version of Autism explanation](#)

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world – National Autistic Society (2024)

What does it look like?

Social communication	Social Interaction
Taking things literally and not understanding abstract concepts Needing extra time to process information or answer questions Repeating what others say to them (this is called echolalia)	Appear to be insensitive seek out time alone when overloaded by other people Not seek comfort from other people Appear to behave 'strangely' or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate Find it hard to form friendships.
Sensory processing	Rigid thought and action
Over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light, colours, temperatures or pain. This can cause anxiety or even physical pain. Read more about what this looks like here .	Often prefer to have routines so that they know what is going to happen. May also repeat movements such as hand flapping, rocking or the repetitive use of an object They may be obsessions and limit people's involvement in other activities and cause distress or anxiety.

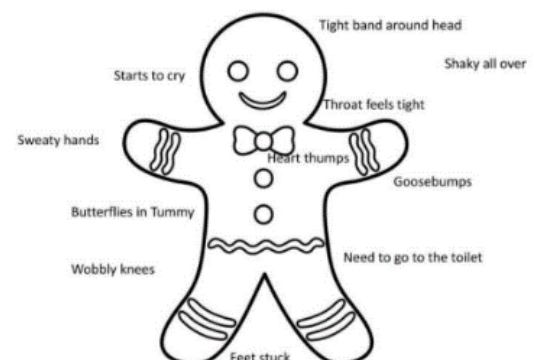


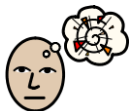
How can we help?

- Give information about what is going to happen in advance
- Provide pictures of new people or places
- Breakdown what is going to happen into a written or visual list
- Give a time scale and make sure that they can understand when it will be finished
- Cue the young person in by saying their name
- before giving instructions
- Identify support network
- Language of safety
- Early warning signs

ivision Trust (2024)

How Your Body Feels

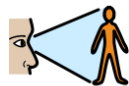




ADHD (*Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder*)

[Child friendly video explanation](#)

(ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition seen as persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that interfere with daily functioning or development



What does it look like?

Inattention symptoms

Failing to give close attention to detail or making careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities.

Difficulty in maintaining concentration when performing tasks or play activities.

Appearing not to listen to what is being said, as if the mind is elsewhere, without any obvious distraction.

Failing to follow through on instructions or finish a task.

Difficulty in organizing tasks and activities.

Reluctance, dislike, or **avoidance of tasks that require sustained mental effort**.

Losing items necessary for tasks or activities such as pencils, mobile phones, or wallets.

Easy distraction by extraneous stimuli.

Forgetfulness with regard to daily activities.

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity symptoms

Fidgeting with or **tapping** hands or feet or **squirming** when seated.

Leaving the seat where remaining seated is expected.

Running about or **climbing** in situations where inappropriate.

An inability to play or engage in leisure activities **quietly**.

Being **'on the go'** or acting as if 'driven by a motor'. Others may experience the person to be restless or **difficult to keep up with**.

Talking excessively.

Blurting out an answer before a question has been completed.

Difficulty waiting his or her turn.

Interrupting or intruding on others.

Why are Neurodivergent young people targeted by offenders?

Dependency and Vulnerability: SEND children may rely on others for support, making them easier to manipulate.

Difficulty Recognising Danger: They may struggle to identify harmful situations or behaviour.

Social Isolation: A lack of social connections makes them more susceptible to manipulation.

Communication Challenges: Difficulty expressing or understanding harmful situations can prevent disclosure of abuse.

Trusting Nature: Their heightened trust can be exploited by offenders.

Limited Ability to Defend Themselves: Physical or cognitive challenges can hinder self-protection.

Understanding of Consent: They may not fully grasp or express discomfort or unwillingness.

Lack of Awareness: Teachers and caregivers might miss signs of abuse or exploitation.

Exploitation for Gain: Offenders may target SEND children for financial or other exploitation.

Limited Support: A lack of resources or protective systems makes them more vulnerable.

Not being seen as sexual beings: Lack of awareness that neurodivergent and SEND people want relationships.



Tools that can be used to help Neurodiverse children communicate.

[Safeguarding Widget Walsall Council](#) – pictures and signs to gather key information

[PCP Tools](#) – person centred thinking tools

[Social stories](#) – comic strip style drawings that help young people understand a situation

[think feel do](#) – An outline of a person that helps them process their thoughts, feelings and actions