



Neurodiversity & Hidden Disabilities

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(She/her/hers)**



A LITTLE BIT
ABOUT ME

DR. ÁINE O'DEA PHD

Neurodivergent



Neurodiversity

“helps us to see neurological & brain differences as edges of talent, ability, & sometimes even exceptional superpower (Smith & Kirby 2021)”.

NEURODIVERGENT CONDITIONS

Autism



presents as non-typical traits & behaviours that affect how individuals experience the world. Individuals may communicate differently, have difficulty understanding non-autistic people, have sensory hypersensitivities, take longer to understand certain forms of information, undertake repetitive behaviours, or become anxious in unfamiliar situations

0.5-1%

Dyspraxia



physical coordination, which causes a person to perform less well than expected in daily activities. Can also affect organisational, time management and working memory skills

2 - 5%

Dyslexia



affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling, a dyslexic may experience other challenges with tasks such as sequencing, processing information and working memory

2-7% (5%)

NEURODIVERGENT CONDITIONS

ADHD



A condition that includes traits such as inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

2-7% (5%)

Dyscalculia



affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills. Dyscalculic individuals may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers, and have problems learning number facts and procedures

2-7% (5%)

Potential business benefits of hiring neurominorities



POTENTIAL BUSINESS BENEFITS

ADHD/ADD

- Intense energy & completing urgent tasks
- Multitasking/task switching
- Good memory and observational skills
- Visible enthusiasm
- Creative problem solvers Perseverance
- Working under pressure

Autism

- Intense/hyper focus
- Observational skills
- Determination
- Analytical & critical thinking
- Values driven; integrity & honesty
- Ability to work unsupervised

Dyspraxia

- Creative
- Often good at strategic thinking
- Holistic thinkers
- High levels of empathy

Dyslexia

- Creative thinking & problem solving
- Good at storytelling
- Strong visual thinkers
- Ability to think in 3D
- Good at maths & mechanical thinking
- Strong verbal skills

THE FACTS WE NEED TO KNOW

1 in 7 people (more than 15% of people) are neurodivergent, meaning that the brain functions, learns and processes information differently (ACAS, 2019).

Highest level of bias exists towards Tourette Syndrome and ADHD/ADD

people mistakenly believe everyone with TS has the swearing tic, coprolalia, whereas only 10-15% do.

40%-50% of adult patients with ADHD have comorbid anxiety and mood disorders (including depression).



Having DCD and ADHD is associated with poorer Health Related Quality of Life

1 in 2 people will have ADHD & DCD



Neurominorities have far worse experiences in the workplace than their neurotypical colleagues believe they do

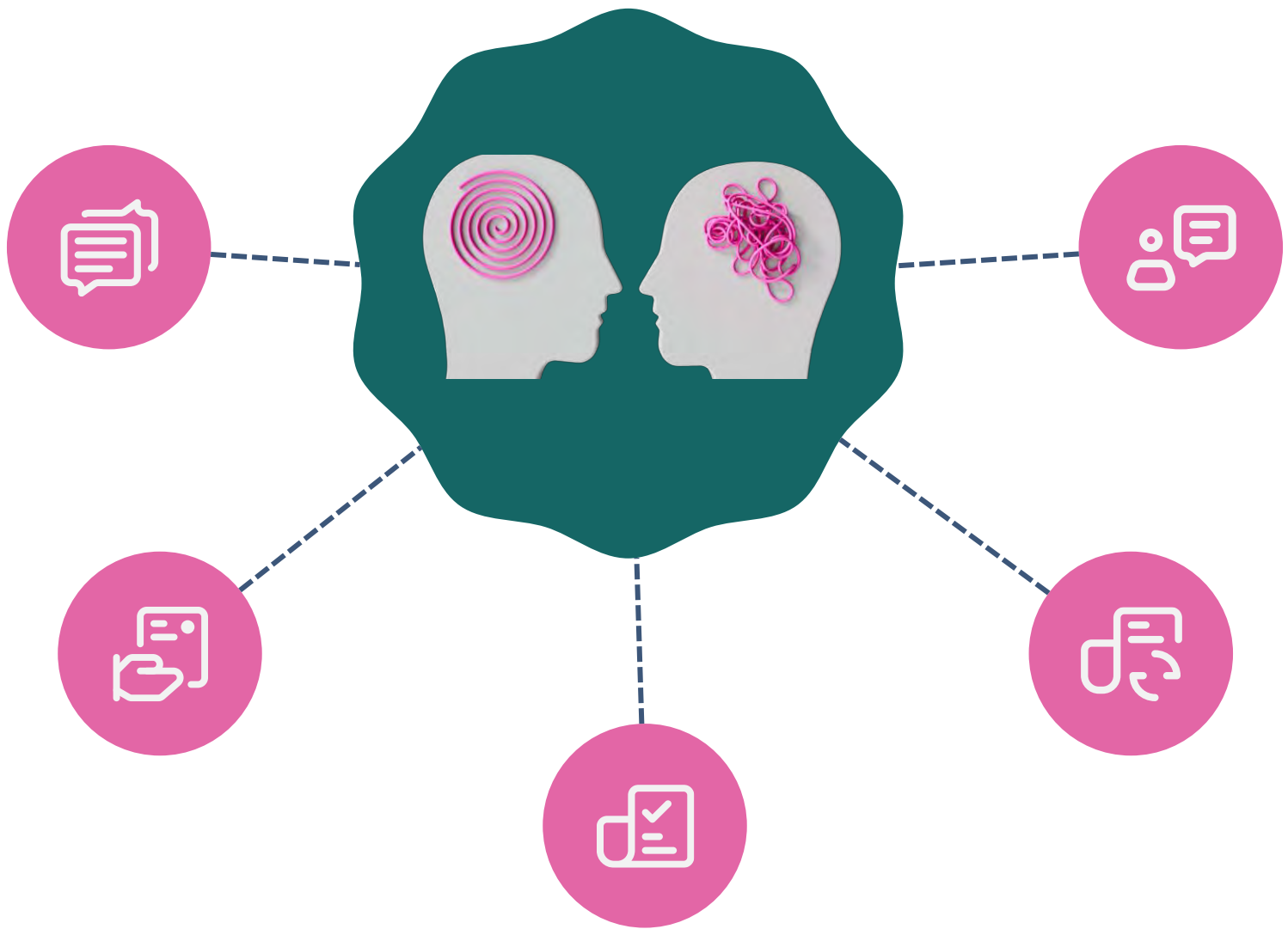


NEURODIVERSITY AT WORK

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Only 46% of employers say there is a general awareness across the workforce about what neurodiversity is and why it's important.

37% of employees say their organisation provides meaningful support to neurodivergent individuals.



55% say they would feel comfortable asking for support or adjustments at work.

73% of HR leaders believe employees would ask for help with mental health or neurodivergence, less than half of affected employees actually disclose their challenges.

Disclosure Rates:
31% of neurodivergent employees have not informed their line manager or HR about their neurodivergence.

- **Privacy Concerns:** 44% feel it's a private matter
- **Stereotypes:** 37% worry about assumptions - based on stereotypes.
- **Stigma:** 34% feel there's too much stigma around neurodivergence.
- **Career Impact:** 29% are concerned about potential negative effects on their career.

(Thompson & Miller
2024)

Most organisations do not include neurodiversity within policy and procedures, or provide training on inclusion

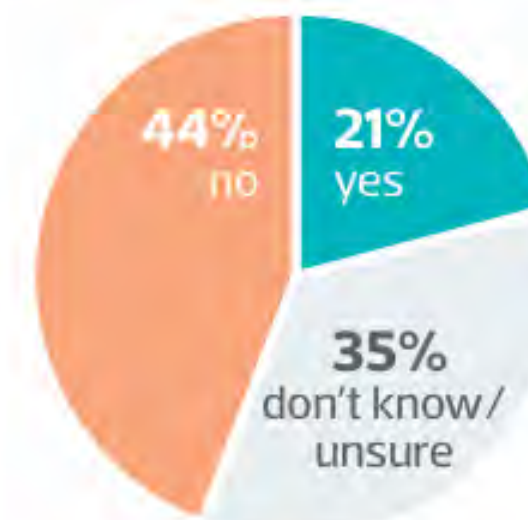
Named in inclusion policies & procedures:



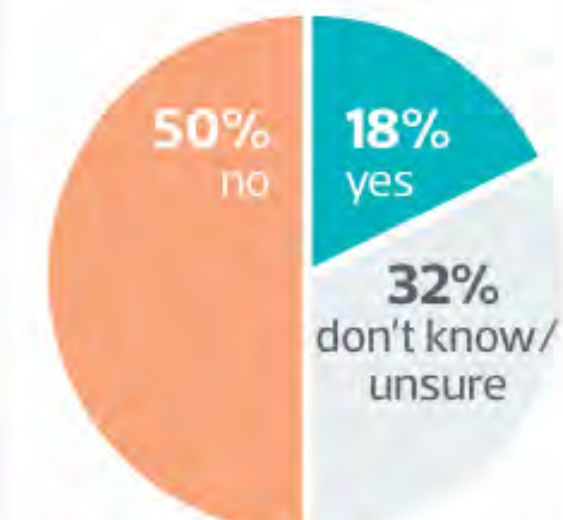
Named in bullying & harassment policies & procedures:



Training available for leaders & managers:

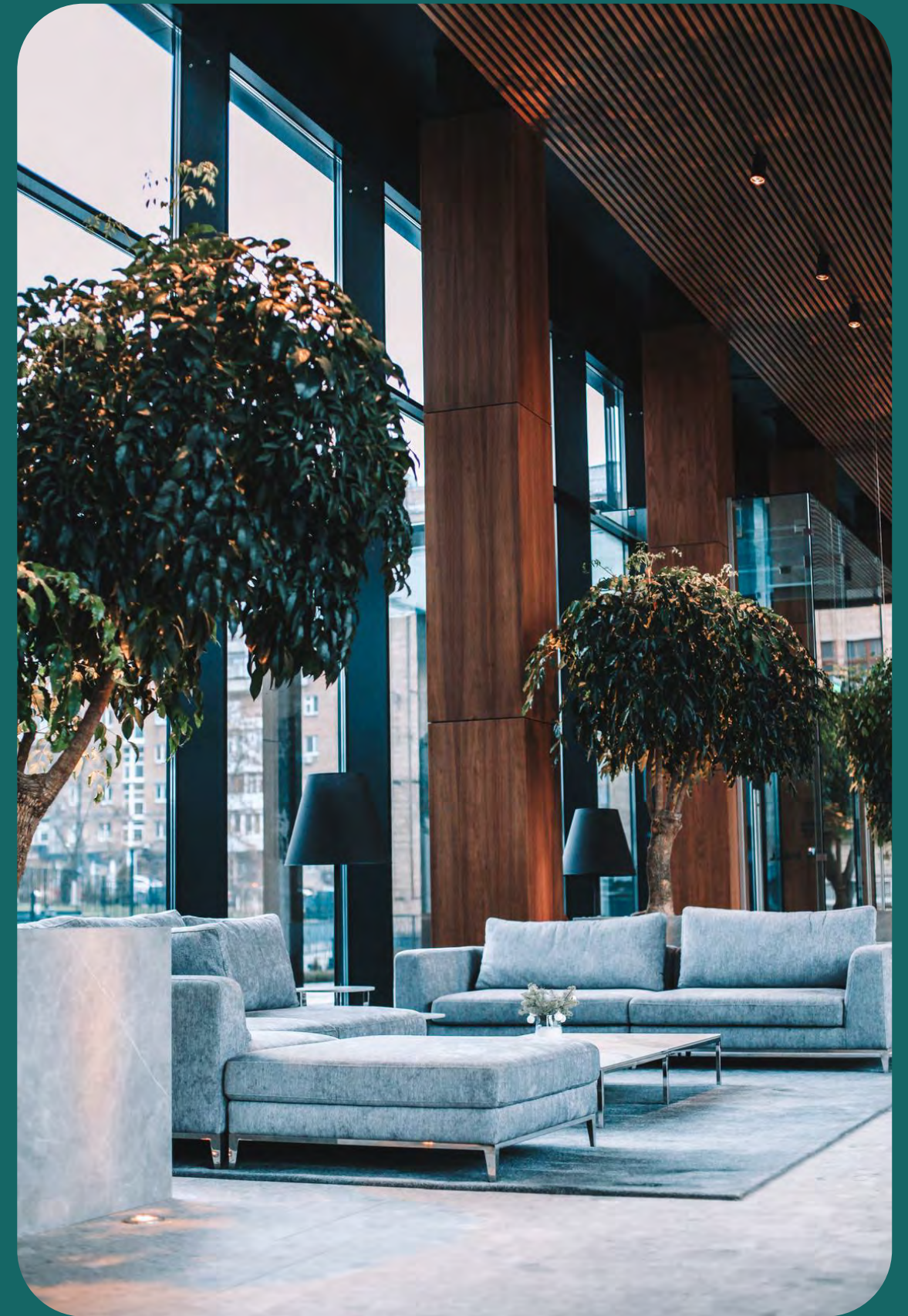


Training available for all staff:





Creating a Neuro- inclusive environment





Developing inclusive policies with accommodations & flexibility

Awareness and understanding of neurodiversity means considering the design of:

- workplace processes
- management practices
- environments
- the way work is organised



Developing inclusive policies with accommodations & flexibility

- Create a neurodiversity policy so that people have a map & process to follow.
- Look inside your business & check on talents there
- Knowing the right questions and asking them
- Ensure that line managers have training so they feel confident to have conversations
- Show that you care & are interested in attracting a neurodiverse range of skills & talents



Training on reasonable adjustments

- Office types: open-plan, on-the-move
- Hot desking considerations
- Describing job roles and expectations explicitly
- Clarity on workplace rules (dress code, lunch breaks)
- Regular review meetings for quick issue resolution
- Discussing specific support needs
- Deciding on disclosure and communication methods
- Learning from past successful adjustments
- Auditing the sensory environment of the workplace
- Digital Tools and Adjustments



WHAT WE EVALUATE IS WHAT WE TREAT

“Having a manager who understands your skills/strengths can be the difference between being understood and supported in life and in the workplace, rather than being misunderstood and placed at risk, because you are forced to play to your challenges, rather than to your significant strengths”.

(Smith & Kirby 2021)



Key considerations for making workplace adjustments

- Be person-centred & ask the person about what they think their support needs are
- Check the context
- Ask for help externally if you are not sure how to support someone (arrange a workplace assessment)
- Adjustments need to be put in place promptly
- Adjustments need time to be embedded
- Some people need coaching to support to plan & embed adjustments into their daily practices
- Be prepared to review adjustments if the job changes in any way.

Service

Work and Access

Disability Equality and Inclusion Training

An employer can apply for funding to arrange and pay for Disability Equality and Inclusion Training for their staff.

How to qualify

Work and Access supports Disability Equality and Inclusion Training for employers/organisations, and the criteria below must be met.

An employer/organisation can use this support if they:

- are a non-public sector employer
- have a paid workforce
- want to undertake staff training and development to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace
- want to deliver an inclusive and user-friendly service for customers with disabilities





Thanks for listening

Talk to me about my
Neurodiversity 101
workshops for your
organisation!



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