



**Community First**  
**Yorkshire**

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## A Volunteer Co-ordinator's introduction to Neurodiversity

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# Welcome

## *Session aims*

Today we will look at how to involve and support volunteers who are Neurodiverse.

By the end of the meeting we will have defined what is meant by Neurodiversity, explored the barriers to engagement often facing individuals, helped raise awareness of the various related conditions and given you practical advice on how best to recruit, develop and support neurodiverse volunteers on your teams.

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Community First  
Yorkshire

*This network meeting is a **safe space** for all*

DIVERSE  
INCLUSIVE  
ACCEPTING  
WELCOMING  
SAFE SPACE  
FOR EVERYONE



<https://www.safespacemovement.co.uk/>

<https://www.safeplaces.org.uk/>



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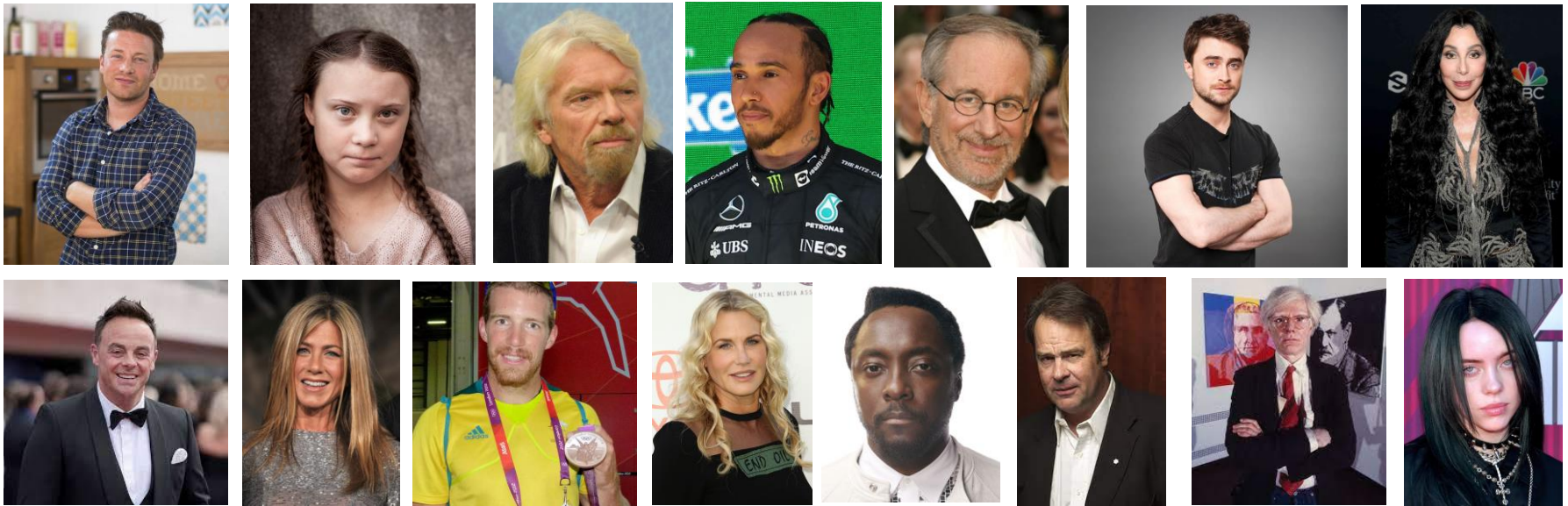
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Zoom poll:-

***How familiar are you with the term  
Neurodiversity?***

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# What do all of these people have in common?



They are all successful in their chosen fields AND they are all Neurodivergent

# What is Neurodiversity?

Everyone's brain is wired differently, with unique ways of thinking, interacting and experiencing the world.



Neurodiversity is based on the theory that these neurological variances, or differences, should be recognised and appreciated just like any other variation, such as gender, race or sexual orientation.

Hazel will explore this during her presentation.

Let's start with a sum.....

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*How would you calculate*

$$28 + 47?$$

*What happens in your head?*

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$30+45$

$8+7=15$ , PUT DOWN THE 5 AND CARRY THE 1,  $4+2=6$ ,  $+1=7$

$8+7, 20+40$ , THEN + THE 60 & 15

$40+20+15$

$28+40+7$

$47+30-2$

$7+8+20+40$

$30+50-5$

$20+40=60$ ,  $8+7=15$ ,  $60+15$

$28+2+45$

$20+40+8+7$

$47+8$ ,  $55+2$

ADD 2 TO MAKE 30,  $30+47=77$ , GIVE BACK THE 2

$60+15$

$28+50=78-3$

$28+7+40$

$8*2=16$ ,  $-1+60$

$30+40=70$ ,  $7-2$

$7+8=15$ , CARRY OVER 10,

$40+20+10=70+5$

$30+47-2$   $30+50=80$ ,  $-(2+5)$

$5+10+10+50$

$20+8+40+7$





*How did you calculate **28 + 47**?*

*Which method was technically correct?*

*Was your method better than someone else's?*

*Did you find it difficult?*

Now consider how challenging that could be for a Neurodivergent person

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## Hazel Griffiths

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Hazel Griffiths is a retired Emergency department nurse and carer for autistic son. She is a member of Harrogate National Autistic Society.

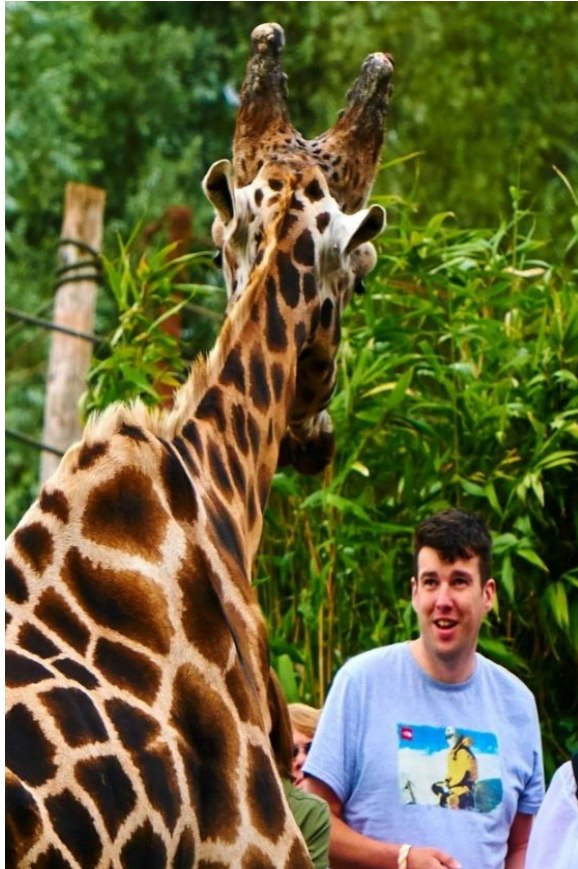
Hazel is also an advisor on many projects; Health Education England, Oliver McGowan Mandatory training (OMMT), Skills for Care workforce expert advisory group, NHS STOMP, Transforming Care, DHSC Building the Right Support and Co design/deliver Autism, Stomp, Human Rights and Carer Awareness training to all job grades and families and speaker at local, regional, national and international conferences.

# Introduction – Who am I?



## Harrogate and district branch

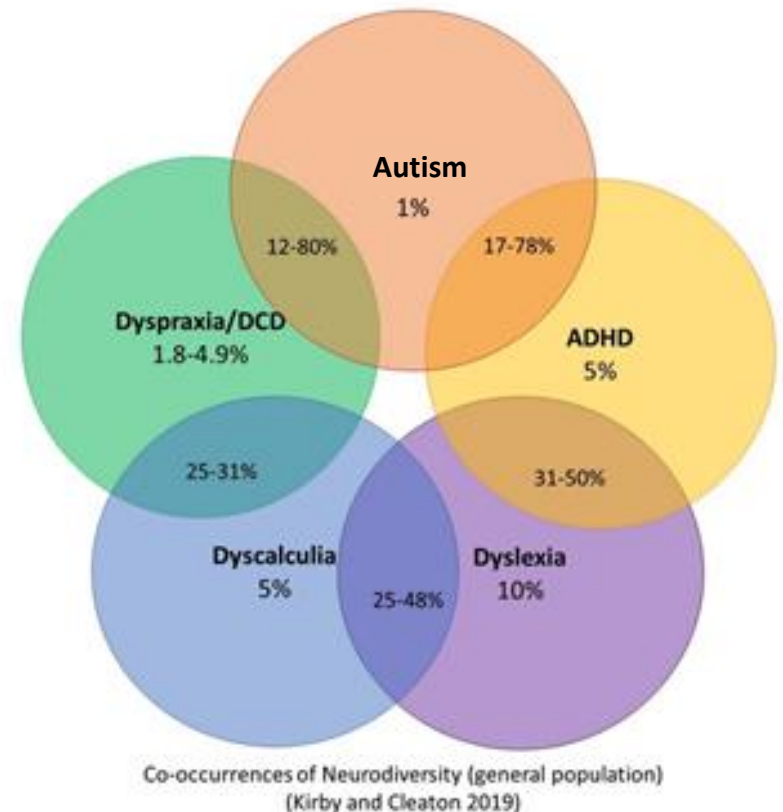
The branch offers support to families in Harrogate, Richmondshire and Craven who have an autistic member.



# What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is a term that applies to all those neurological differences

It is being used more commonly to nurture the idea that these differences are a valuable variation – an important part of human diversity, something to be celebrated rather than cured. It recognises that everyone with a neurological difference is an individual – not part of a labelled group who will all behave, react or learn in the same way. It focuses on celebrating what people can do rather than what they struggle with in order to fully realise their potential in their life



# Autism Act 2009

## Autism Strategy 2021-2026

The strategy outlines the Government's plans to improve your services and support for autistic people. It is the first strategy to include children and young people

- **Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society**
  - Make transport and communities more autism-inclusive
- **Improving autistic people's access to education and support transitions into adulthood**
  - Improve how the SEND system supports autistic children and young people
- **Supporting more autistic people into employment**
- **Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people**
  - Improve early identification and reduce autism diagnosis waiting times
- **Building the right support in the community**

### **Equality Act 2010**

- Anticipatory Duty
- Reasonable Adjustments (includes staff training)
- Unlawful disability discrimination

# What is Autism?

- It's lifelong
- Neurodevelopmental not a mental illness
- Strong genetic link
- Social interaction
- Communication
- Highly focussed interests or hobbies
- Masking
- Meltdowns
- Shutdowns
- Anxiety

## What are language preferences regarding Autism

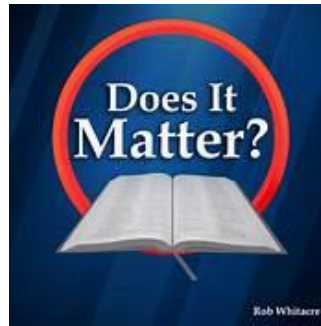
87% of individuals with an Autism diagnosis preferred identity first language such as “I am Autistic” rather than “a person with Autism”

**Language is powerful**  
'Disorder' = external value-judgement  
& highly negative

**Who should decide  
the words we use?**

### **Commitment**

Everyone to consider  
the language that  
they use.



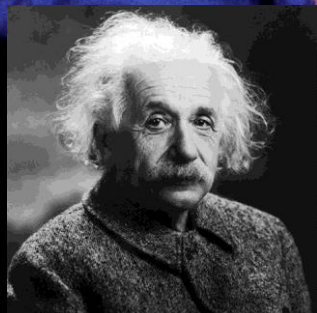
**Who has the power to change  
it?**

**Who should decide the words  
that are used to describe a  
whole community of people?**

Develop a more  
balanced narrative  
around autism

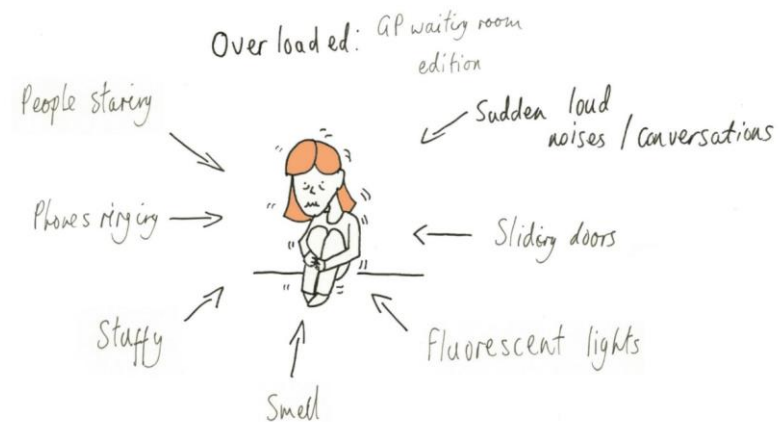
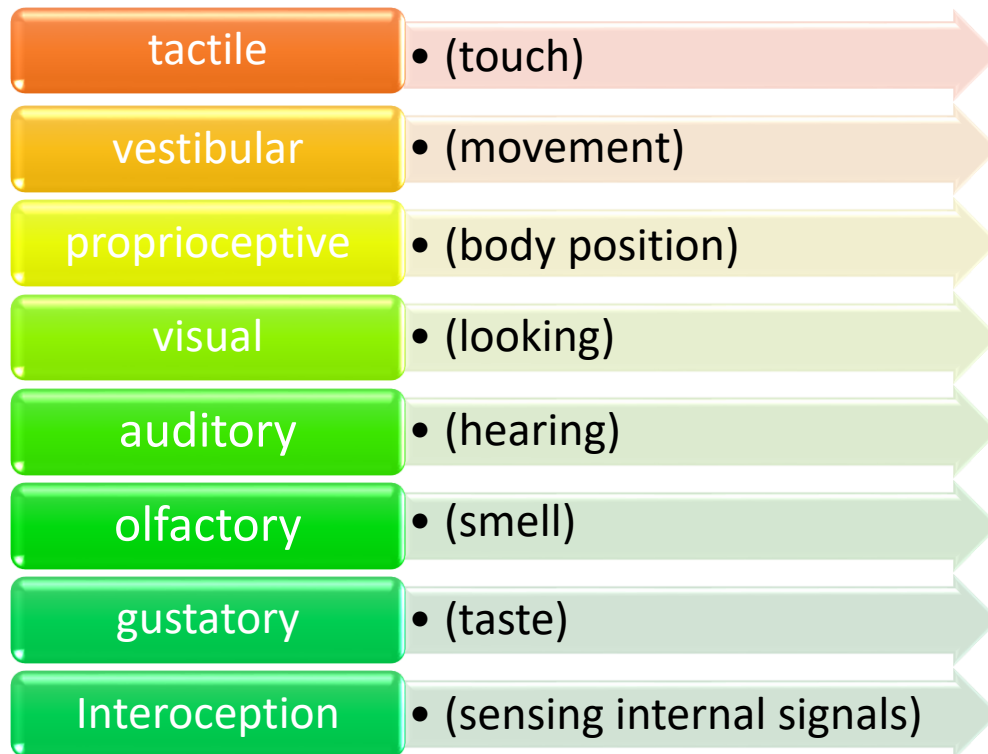
**Should we describe  
people using language  
they find offensive?**



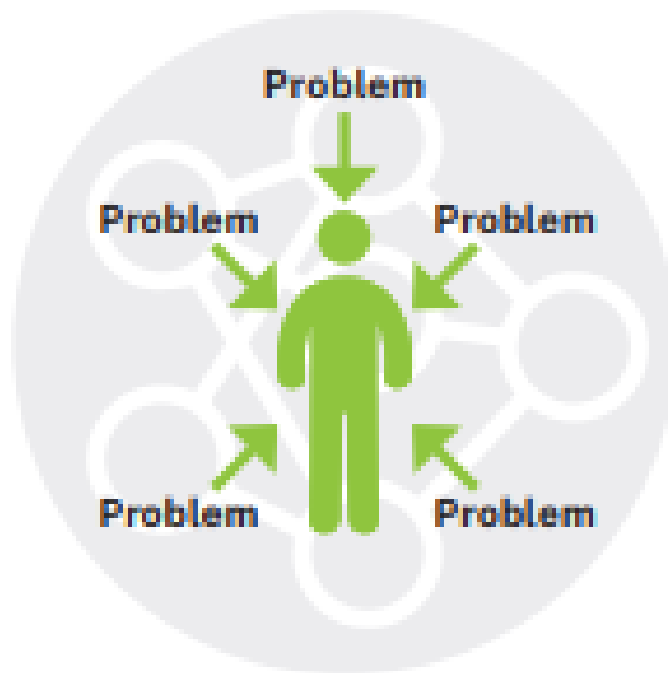




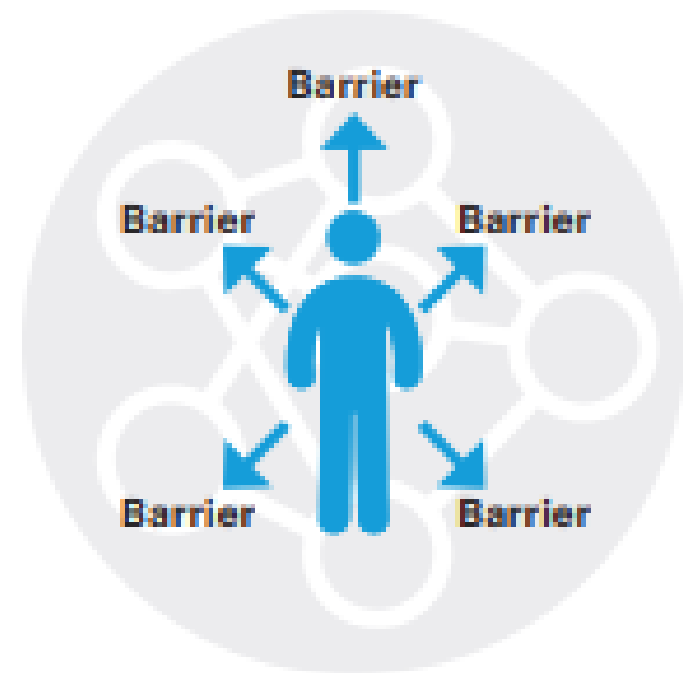
Some autistic people's senses can be hyper or hypo sensitive which is why reasonable adjustments are so important



## The Medical Model



## The Social Model



# Background: The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training Structure

## The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism

### Tier 1

For people who require general awareness of the support autistic people or people with a learning disability may need.



90 minutes



elearning with handbook

and



60 minutes

Online interactive session

### Tier 2

For people who may need to provide care and support for autistic people or people with a learning disability.

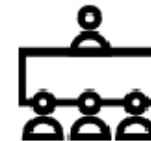


90 minutes



elearning with handbook

and



1 day

Face to face training

or



# Coproduction



Organic bridge



Requires “a responsive and collaborative movement towards shared goals and a willingness to learn from each other” – it is not a “one-way street”

“Trusting relationships must be developed, mutual expertise acknowledged and a shared vision created”

- Autism **acceptance** contributes to good mental health (*Cage et al*)
- **Positive autistic social identity** appeared to offer protective mechanisms against poor mental health (*Cooper et al, 2017*)
- Meaningful participation in autism research involves respect, authenticity, **assumptions**, infrastructure and empathy (*Sue Fletcher-Watson et al, 2019*)
- " **Self-determination** should be at the centre of any discussion...Autistic people should be directing the language used to describe autistic people" (*Botha et al, 2020*)
- Describing autism in negative ways "has a negative effect on how society views and treats autistic people and maybe even negatively effect how autistic people view themselves" (*Bottema-Beutel et al, 2021*)
- "Re-conceptualising autism as purely a 'developmental disorder' to recognising a **neurodiversity** perspective" (*Happe & Frith, 2020*)
- Qualitative themes reflected the **rejection** of stigmatising and medicalised language. (*Bury at al, 2020*)

If I can make ONE  
person  
Laugh long  
enough to  
forget their  
problems then  
my day was  
not wasted.



Can I make  
someone's day  
better?

Do I need to  
catch happy  
emotions?  
What will make  
me smile?

**NHS**  
Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys  
NHS Foundation Trust

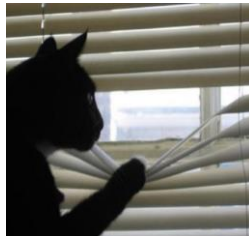


## Look after your mental and emotional health.

Being empathetic and  
compassionate to your own well  
being will support you passing on  
those attributes to another



Am I noticing  
the natural  
world around  
me?



Be kind to  
yourself  
and others

Run or  
walk into  
your well-  
being



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***Thank you Hazel***

*Thank  
You*

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## Aleks Fagelman – they / them

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#mynameis: Ah-lex Fay-gul-man

Aleks Fagelman, pronouns they/them, is the Assistant Community Curator at Leeds Industrial Museum and Thwaite Watermill.

They are autistic and are an advocate for autistic people within volunteering and work places.

They volunteered as part of Leeds Museums and Galleries before they got their job.





*Thank you Aleks*





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**Please raise your virtual hands –  
thank you**

Zoom poll:-

***How confident are you on what  
Neurodiversity means and how it can  
impact an individual as well as the wider  
community?***

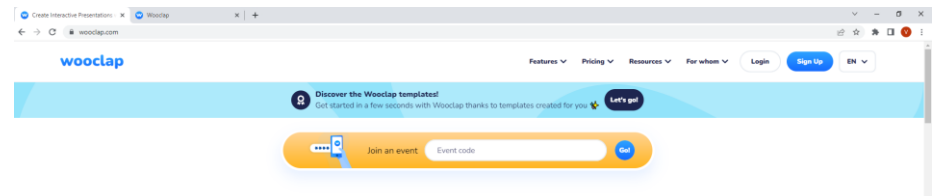
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# *Breakout rooms*

15 minutes

CASE STUDY

**wooclap**



Go to - **Wooclap.com**  
Event code - **UJSYHN**

## Case study 1: Autism

*Volunteer : 21 Year Old Female (K)*

*Environment : Community Café.*

*Role : Volunteer Café Assistant*

K received support throughout their education but has always cherished their independence - more so since leaving school.

In the past when applying for paid or voluntary positions they have felt overlooked when they declared their autism diagnosis. This time they want to go through the process and not declare their diagnosis. This is their right and through their application and interview they are successful in obtaining a voluntary position.

K relates to her family that all is going very well. They like the environment and the people they work with. After a number of weeks however K reports difficulties when being given instructions by one of the kitchen supervisors. They say that the instructions are too confusing and they are aware that they aren't able to execute them all. K mentions this to her family but they are adamant that they don't want to declare their autism diagnosis – stating that they want to be independent and deal with any issues themselves.

Two weeks later K no longer wishes to volunteer at the café.

- 1. What might the community cafe have done?**
- 2. What might K have done?**
- 3. What have we learnt from this?**



### **What might the community cafe have done?**

It depends what the café has in place. They might only initiate actions if they know in advance when a volunteer has declared something, e.g. I have trouble reading. Many reasonable adjustments can be put in place, but it is whether they are implemented because of prior knowledge or is the café reacting to what they see? But to have nothing declared and when given an opportunity to discuss their needs, a volunteer remains tight-lipped, should the café employ stealth tactics? What is their procedure for new volunteers and staff? Is there an induction? Is support offered in the form of supervision? Could this have been utilised to better support K?

### **What might K have done?**

This is a highly sensitive area, as an individual's diagnosis is always their property. They may wish to tell their immediate family, they may even wish to keep it from them. K might need some support in looking at the broader aspects of not declaring their autism – focussing on their positive qualities and skills. Ultimately it is still their right and so they should be respected and supported appropriately.

### **What have we learnt from this?**

Moving into paid employment or volunteering will bring about many challenges. If an individual feels they have been treated unfairly in the past, with or without proof, they will feel vulnerable about declaring their diagnosis. Unfortunately there have been many instances where people have declared, but organisations have failed to act suitably upon that information. With encouragement and support, if K showcased their positive attributes and work experience as well as outlining specific support needs, they could use this experience in a positive way next time they apply for a position.

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# Thank you

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Lizzie Clapham and Vicki Sharp 01904 704177

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[www.communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk](http://www.communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk)

Twitter @volunteeringNY

Facebook @Comm1stYorks



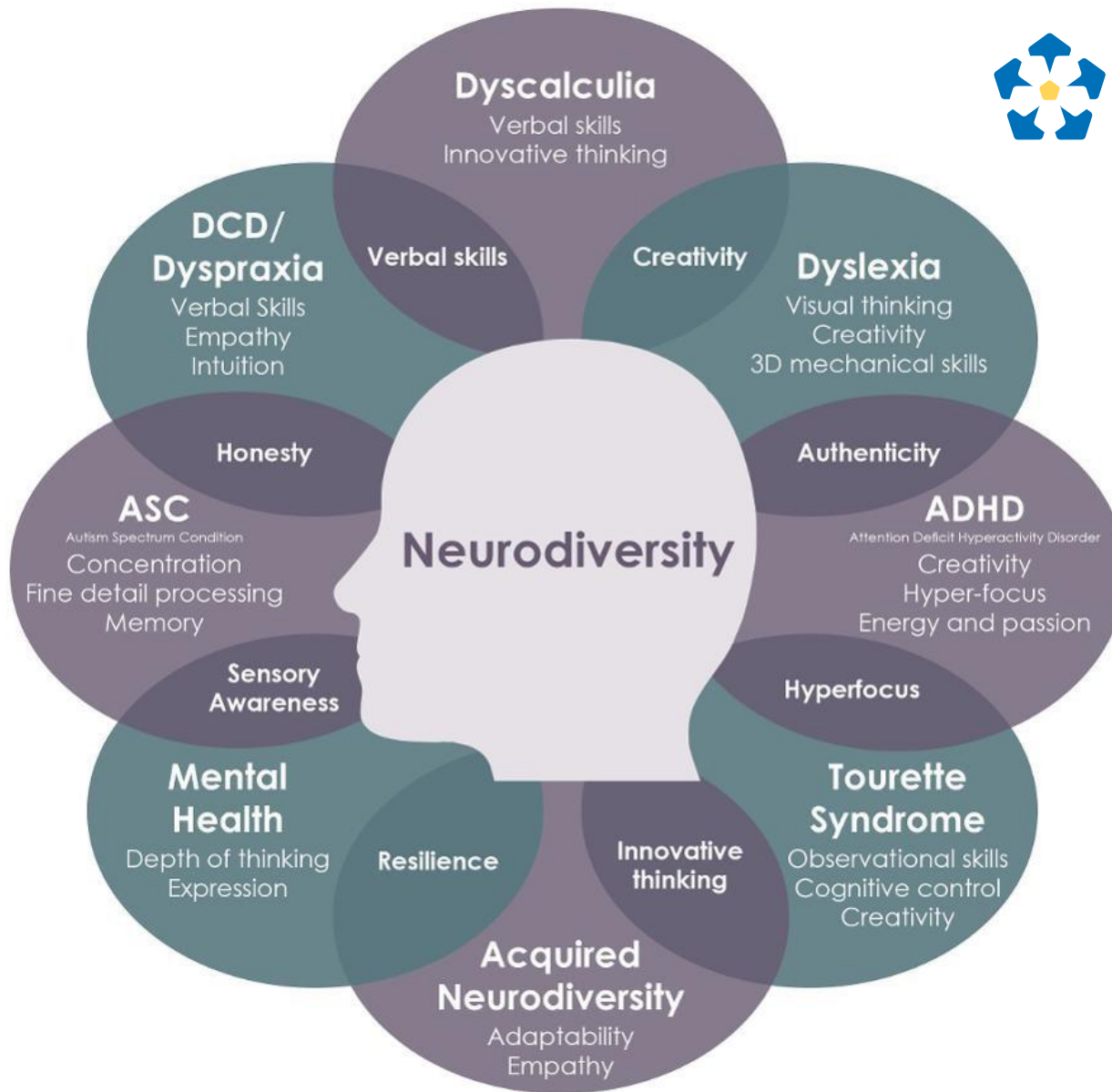
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## *Resources*

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## ***ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity***

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- About 4% of the population have ADHD
- ADHD affects a person's ability to focus. It can cause inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness
- People with ADHD can be some of the most creative members on a team, bringing energy and new approaches to their projects
- Several studies have shown that adults with ADHD tend to be out-of-the-box thinkers and calm under pressure

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## ***AUTISM***

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- About 2% of the population is autistic
- Autism affects how a person perceives the world and interacts and socialises with others, making it sometimes challenging for them to pick up and interpret social cues
- Autistic people can be sensitive to lights, noise, touch and smells
- Autistic people are often highly logical and good at absorbing and remembering facts, attention to detail, and recognising patterns

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## ***DYSLEXIA***

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- About 10% of the population are dyslexic
- Dyslexia impacts the way the brain processes information such as reading, writing and spelling
- It can cause challenges with processing information quickly, organisation, sequencing, and spoken language
- Dyslexic people can be very good at creative thinking, problem solving and verbal communication
- About 35% of entrepreneurs are Dyslexic

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## ***DYSPRAXIA***

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- About 6% of the population are Dyspraxic
- Dyspraxia affects your physical coordination. It can also affect your gross motor skills, such as being able to catch and kick a ball, run and ride a bicycle
- Dyspraxia can also affect your ability to organise yourself
- Dyspraxic individuals are often creative, determined and really good at developing their own strategies to overcome challenges

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## ***TOURETTE SYNDROME***

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- About 1% of the population have Tourette Syndrome
- Tourette Syndrome (TS) can cause sudden, uncontrolled, repetitive muscle movements and sounds called “tics”
- Stressful situations can make the tics more frequent, prolonged and more pronounced
- People with TS can be faster at assembling sounds into words (phonology) and are often high-achieving, creative and empathetic

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## ***DYSCALCULIA***

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- About 5% of the population have dyscalculia
- Dyscalculia affects an individual's ability to acquire and use mathematical skills
- For some, it affects how they see numbers. For others, it might make symbols difficult to read, or they may have trouble understanding finances, data and using numbers in everyday life
- People with dyscalculia often have strengths such as intuitive and strong strategic thinking, are very creative and have a love of words

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## ***What support can be offered in the workplace?***

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- Make a commitment to become a more neuro-inclusive organisation
- Understand where your organisation currently is, where you want to be, and how to get there
- Create a culture where neurodivergent talent can thrive through providing support services for neurodivergent talent, education and awareness and reviewing your current processes and
- ways of working (e.g., recruitment)





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## *Resources*

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The National Autistic Society (NAS) - <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

NAS North Yorkshire Central Branch -

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/branches/nas-north-yorkshire-central-branch>

The College of Policing - <https://www.college.police.uk/support-forces/diversity-and-inclusion/neurodiversity-glossary-terms>

BBC – Chris Packham - ‘Inside Our Autistic Minds’

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0bbnjvx>

‘Kids meet a Woman with Tourette’s’ -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54qoxmF-GOw>

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## *Resources – work place support*

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How to use digital technology to support neurodivergent staff -

<https://www.thecatalyst.org.uk/resource-articles/how-to-use-digital-tech-to-support-neurodivergent-staff>

Understanding Neurodiversity in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers -

<https://www.atkinsonhrconsulting.co.uk/single-post/understanding-neurodiversity-in-the-workplace-a-guide-for-employers>

Creating the Dialogue for Neurodivergence Inclusive Workplaces -

<https://alittlemoreunderstanding.files.wordpress.com/2023/01/creating-a-dialogue-for-neurodivergence-inclusive-workplaces-1-2.pdf>

Neurodiversity Celebration Week resource hub-

<https://www.neurodiversityweek.com/resource-hub>