

Talking about neurodiversity

Talking about neurodiversity in a sensitive way can help:

- prevent problems at work
- create an inclusive organisation where all workers feel comfortable and supported

Telling others

Nobody has to tell their employer they're neurodivergent. If they do decide to share it, it's up to them when and how they do this.

An employer should take a worker seriously and offer support, regardless of:

- when they share their condition – this includes if they only decide to share when a formal procedure is started
- whether or not they have a diagnosis

Someone might not want to tell people at work because they're worried about:

- getting a negative reaction
- being stereotyped

However, talking about it can help someone get any support they need at work.

It can also be important if there's a health and safety risk to them or others. For example, if an employee with ADHD is struggling to concentrate when using heavy machinery.

Employers should take steps to [make their organisation neuroinclusive](#) so that:

- workers feel comfortable talking about neurodiversity
- workers can still get support without sharing their neurodivergence

If an employer suspects someone is neurodivergent

An employer might notice that a worker is having difficulty with certain things at work. They might suspect a worker is neurodivergent.

The employer should approach this situation sensitively. They should not ask directly about what they suspect. They should:

- talk to the worker about what they've noticed
- frame the conversation positively by focusing on what [support and reasonable adjustments](#) might help
- keep anything they discuss confidential, unless the worker agrees otherwise

Using appropriate language around neurodiversity

Language can affect how people feel. Using appropriate language when talking about neurodiversity can:

- make people feel more comfortable during conversations
- avoid causing someone distress

Everyone should be sensitive in the terms they use.

For example, when talking about neurodivergence, avoid terms like 'suffering from' or 'symptoms'. These can suggest a condition is an illness when it is not.

Language in this area is constantly changing and people will have different preferences. It can be tricky to know what's appropriate.

Some good ways to know what language to use include:

- asking someone what terms they prefer
- listening to what neurodivergent workers say
- matching a neurodivergent worker's language when appropriate – for example, in a one-to-one conversation

Employers and workers can show respect and sensitivity around language by:

- being open about not knowing things and making the effort to learn
- acknowledging if they get it wrong and taking steps to resolve it
- remembering that every neurodivergent person is different

[Find out about how to talk and write about autism from the National Autistic Society \(PDF, 158KB\)](#)

Get more advice and support

Find out more about:

- [considering if someone's disabled](#)
- [talking about disability](#)

If you have any questions, you can also [contact the Acas helpline](#).