

Neurodiversity toolkit

A toolkit to provide neurodiverse individuals and their line managers with reasonable adjustments guidance and to signpost them to support services.

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Key details

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| Stage of practice | Untested |
| Purpose | Organisational |
| Topic | Diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) |
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| Region | North East |
| Partners | Police |
| Stage of implementation | The practice is implemented. |
| Start date | October 2025 |
| Scale of initiative | Local |
| Target group | Workforce |

Aim

The aim of the neurodiversity toolkit is to:

- support neurodivergent staff and officers by providing clear and accessible information about neurodiversity
- support the challenges individuals may experience and the strengths they bring to the workplace
- provide guidance on reasonable workplace adjustments, to support individuals and their line managers to understand how to reduce and remove barriers
- promote consistent and supportive conversations between individuals and line managers by using structure tool such as support plans
- encourage neurodiversity to be recognised, valued, and supported as part of an inclusive workplace culture
- signpost the workforce to support services within the organisation and externally

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the neurodiversity toolkit are to:

- improve the awareness of neurodiversity among staff, officers, and line managers
- improve the retention and engagement of neurodivergent staff and officers
- improve access to support routes such as neurodiversity champions, occupational health and access to work
- improve managers' confidence to support neurodivergent staff and officers
- reduce the number of barriers to effective performance caused by unadjusted processes, environments, or communication methods
- decrease workplace stress linked to unmet neurodivergent needs
- reduce the number of grievances, complaints, or disputes relating to unmet reasonable adjustments
- reduce the number of sickness absence and burnout associated with unsupported neurodivergent conditions

Description

The neurodiversity toolkit was introduced in response to an increasing recognition within Cleveland Police to provide improved support to neurodivergent staff and officers. The purpose of the toolkit was also to align with the force's duties under The Equality Act 2010 and a broader commitment to

inclusion, wellbeing, and retention.

Planning process

Cleveland Police received feedback from the force's Neurodiversity and Disability Network, the Neurodiversity Support Network and working group on the experiences of neurodivergent staff and officers. The feedback was collated to identify common challenges and existing good practices. The following areas were considered:

- legal responsibilities around reasonable adjustments
- existing internal support mechanisms such as support plans, occupational health, and neurodiversity champions
- practical and low cost adjustments that could be quickly implemented
- the need for clear guidance for both employees and managers

The intention was for the toolkit to be practical, proportionate, and usable across a wide range of roles.

Roles and teams involved

The following roles and teams have been involved in the development of the toolkit:

- professional development team
- learning and development team
- equality diversity and inclusion team
- neurodiversity subject matter leads
- neurodiversity champions
- staff networks
- line managers

Neurodiversity toolkit

The neurodiversity toolkit has been created in Microsoft Word to ensure ease for accessibility, updating and compatibility with assistive technology. The format also enables individuals to extract, adapt, or print sections. Alternatively, the toolkit is also available as a PDF.

The contents of the toolkit has been informed by staff and officer feedback, common themes from workplace needs assessments, and recurring adjustment requests. The contents of the toolkit includes:

- an introduction to the toolkit
- what is neurodiversity and why does it matter
- what are workplace adjustments
- an overview of neurodivergent conditions
- advice and guidance
- access to work update
- your equality and diversity information
- guidance for line managers

The toolkit is available on the force's intranet and has been promoted through internal communication channels, line management engagement, and neurodiversity awareness activity. Managers are encouraged to use the toolkit to support conversations with staff, implement support plans, and consider reasonable adjustments.

Cost

The development and implementation of the neurodiversity toolkit did not require any funding. The toolkit was developed using internal expertise and existing resources. Where adjustments or support require funding (for example specialist software or equipment), these are managed by occupational health and access to work.

Senior management approval

Senior management approval was obtained through existing governance and equality, diversity and inclusion oversight arrangements. The initiative aligned with organisational priorities around wellbeing, inclusion, and workforce support, and therefore did not require exceptional or separate approval outside normal governance processes.

Evaluation

An evaluation began in November 2025 and is being led by Cleveland Police. The evaluation is using qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the toolkit impact for providing guidance to

individuals and line managers.

The evaluation is collating feedback from staff, officers, and line managers on how the toolkit is being used to support conversations, support plans and workplace adjustments. The purpose of the feedback is to identify areas where guidance is effective and where further clarification or additional support is required.

The evaluation is also reviewing:

- support plan usage
- the number of adjustment requests
- number of occupational health referrals
- number of access to work applications

The findings from the ongoing evaluation inform updates to the toolkit, refreshes of guidance, and wider organisational learning activity. This approach supports continuous improvement while ensuring the toolkit remains a practical, trusted resource for both staff and managers.

Overall impact

The neurodiversity toolkit has had a positive impact on how neurodiversity is understood and supported within Cleveland Police. The toolkit has supported the workforce in having more informed conversations, earlier consideration of reasonable adjustments, and delivering a confident approach to neurodiversity in the workplace.

Key observations from the toolkit include:

- the toolkit has been accessed over 700 times
- improved consistency in approach to neurodiversity support across teams, with managers having clearer guidance on their role and responsibilities
- greater visibility of neurodiversity as a workplace consideration, particularly in relation to reasonable adjustments, training and day-to-day working practices
- staff and officers value having clear, accessible guidance that explains neurodivergent conditions alongside practical workplace adjustments

- managers have reported to be more confident in starting and structuring conversations about neurodiversity and support needs
- increased use of structured mechanisms, such as support plans, to record and review agreed adjustments

The toolkit has informed wider organisational conversations about inclusion, wellbeing, and workforce retention, contributing to a more joined up approach to neurodiversity support.

Learning

What went well

- One of the key successes has been the focus on practicality and accessibility. The toolkit has been designed to be a usable, plain language resource rather than a policy document to foster engagement from the workforce. The toolkit emphasis on real world adjustments and clear signposting means it can be applied flexibly across different roles and working environments.
- It is important to have a collaborative approach during the development stage. By involving neurodiversity subject matter leads, staff networks, and operational practitioners, this ensures the content reflects lived experience as well as organisational requirements.
- Embed the toolkit within existing processes such as support plans, occupational health and access to work, rather than creating new standalone systems to support a smoother implementation process.

Challenges

- A key challenge for the force was the variation in baseline knowledge and confidence among line managers. While the toolkit provided guidance, some managers required additional reassurance and encouragement, particularly where conversations about neurodiversity felt unfamiliar or sensitive.
- Competing organisational priorities also meant that uptake was not always immediate or consistent, particularly in high pressure operational areas.

Weaknesses

- The toolkit relies on active use by managers and individuals, meaning its effectiveness can vary depending on local leadership and engagement. Where managers are less confident or proactive,

the toolkit may be underutilised.

- As a static document, the toolkit's impact depends on ongoing visibility and reinforcement. Without regular reminders, training inputs, or updates, there is a risk it could be perceived as a reference resource rather than a living tool.

Recommendations

- It is essential to plan for ongoing reinforcement and review, rather than viewing implementation as a one-off activity.
- Involve neurodivergent staff and practitioners earliest opportunity to ensure authenticity and relevance.
- Support managers alongside the resource, recognising that guidance alone may not be sufficient to build confidence.
- Provide a resource which is practical and accessible, avoiding overly technical or policy heavy language.

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