

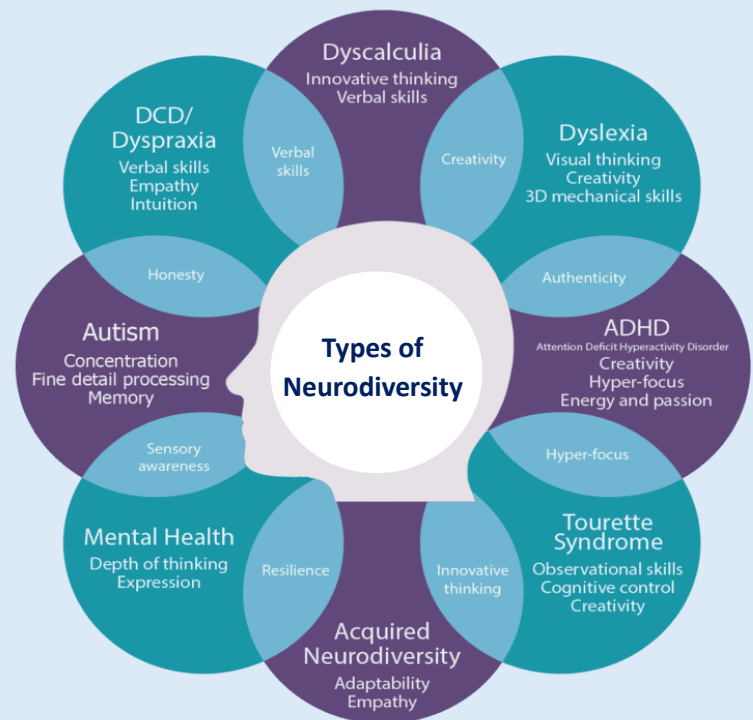


Working towards a Neurodiverse Friendly Town: The Role of Local Businesses in Alcester

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to people whose brains develop or work differently. Neurodivergent individuals experience different strengths and struggles to what is considered 'typical'.

Around 15-20% of the UK population is neurodivergent. Recognising common neurodivergent traits and creating a more accessible and comfortable environment can combat social isolation and contribute to a more inclusive, equitable and respectful society.



Recognising Neurodivergent Traits

Each case of neurodiversity is unique. However, awareness of common traits that neurodiverse individuals can exhibit can aid the welcoming of neurodiversity into our local businesses:

- ❖ Communication difficulties: eye-contact avoidance; struggles with multi-voice scenarios, adversity to small talk; lacking social cues.
- ❖ Sensory issues: aversions to bright lights, crowds, temperatures, background distractions.
- ❖ Surprising reactions: difficulty with processing emotions, overstimulation, requirement to remove oneself from a situation, verbal or physical outbursts, clamming up.
- ❖ Special Interests: over-animation, excessive excitement and language garbling when discussing an interest.

What can you do to support customers and staff?

- ❖ Provide staff with neurodiversity training to develop skills, raise awareness and improve situational judgment.
- ❖ Supply sensory stimuli, e.g., noise-cancelling headphones, fidget toys, stress balls.
- ❖ Offer a calm area away from the main activities of the site.
- ❖ Maintain clear, visual cues when conveying information, e.g., menus, signage.
- ❖ Practice inclusive hiring practices to foster a neurodiversity-friendly environment from within. Recognise that some traditional interview advice (e.g., eye contact) can be difficult for neurodivergent candidates.
- ❖ Encourage feedback and cultivate an open, adjustable environment where staff and customers can share ideas to improve the accessibility of your business.