**Neuro – Inclusive support for students and newly qualified social workers**

Neurodiversity is the diversity or variation of cognitive functioning in people. Everyone has

a unique brain and therefore different skills, abilities, and needs.

Some of the challenges students and NQSW’s have experienced:

• Disrupted thinking/concentration from being in a loud open spaced room

• Expectation to verbally contribute in a shared space with no time to prepare

• No time to process information

• Exhaustion

Things to watch out for:

• Individual struggling to retain information or retrieve information quickly

• Skills in practical work but written work not always to standard, or late

• Individual working over and above the work day hours to keep up

• Feeling unable to share challenges and becoming withdrawn

• Time management concerns

• Difficulty transitioning between tasks

• Hyperfocus or lack of focus

There may be many more signs and it is important to consider what might be happening

before considering capability concerns.

How to support:

• Make sure you create a space of safety for the individual to share any challenges. [1. Psychological Safety for Neurodivergent Social Workers - A Series Introduction (ndsocialworker.wixsite.com)](https://ndsocialworker.wixsite.com/ndsw/post/1-psychological-safety-for-neurodivergent-social-workers-a-series-introduction)

• Do not expect the person to know what they need – this should be a collaborative

discussion between you to understand where help might be useful.

• Think about the environment – is there a quiet space, where is the work space

situated, is there external stimulus that could cause sensory distress?

• Consider communication – be clear and use the “what, why and when” method (what

you want, when you want it and why its needed).

• Avoid sarcasm or ambiguity

• Incorporate visual element if needed – flow chart or diagrams to explain complex work

• Give context to open questions

• Ask questions – does the person need information in writing? Bullet points?

• Provide check – ins, but make sure they are scheduled rather than interrupting to ask if

things are ok.

• Help create a healthy culture of breaks, movement and taking lunch.

• Provide agendas and inform of changes

• Understand energy accounting in neurodivergent people and be flexible

[The unique experience of neurodivergent burnout   - Creased Puddle](https://www.creasedpuddle.co.uk/the-unique-experience-of-neurodivergent-burnout/)

Supervision:

• Is the purpose clear?

• Is the space safe?

• Enable the person to plan and prepare – and give time for them to process questions

• No judgement if a person needs to use something to focus – stimming toys, or doesn’t

hold eye contact

• Keep tasks focused and clear with agreed deadlines

• Provide an environment that enables the individual to remain focused on the task – eg

not asking them to write supervision notes during the meeting, or introducing too many

topics.

• Provide constructive, timely and balanced feedback, including positive feedback.

There are a number of strengths that come with different ways of thinking, and these need

to be explored and encouraged in balance with any identified needs.

Please refer to the staff network group for support and guidance.