



DIVERSITY PROJECT

# NEURODIVERSITY VERSUS OTHER AREAS OF DIVERSITY

Neurodiversity is often confused or mixed up with other definitions and areas of diversity. The below may provide some guidance.

## Neurodiversity versus cognitive diversity

Cognitive diversity recognises the value-add by combining people from a wide range of backgrounds in a team. It refers to the inclusion of people with different viewpoints, different ways of thinking, different skill sets and other cognitive abilities.

Neurodiversity describes the variation in human neurocognitive functioning and behaviour. Combining neurotypical and neurodivergent thinkers can be a valuable addition to a company's diversity of thought. Hence, neurodiversity can make an important contribution to overall cognitive diversity.

## Neurodiversity versus mental health

Mental health and neurodiversity are not the same. The concept of neurodiversity considers neurodivergence as simply another part of human biodiversity. Mental health problems can affect neurotypical and neurodivergent brains alike. Being neurodivergent does not equal having a mental health condition.

However, it should be noted that neurodivergent individuals may be more prone to certain disorders than the general population. For example, anxiety disorders have a high prevalence among individuals on the autism spectrum. In part, this can be attributed to the challenges and frustrations experienced when trying to navigate a neurotypical world.

## Neurodiversity versus disability

Neurodiversity aims to highlight the positive attributes of different neurocognitive functioning, rather than focus on deficits or deviations from a set standard.

Neurodivergent conditions often come with pronounced strengths. However, there will typically also be areas where neurodivergent individuals struggle. For individuals with ADHD, for example, these areas will often be related to organising, planning and admin tasks.

However, neurodivergent individuals, in particular on the high functioning end of the spectrum, typically do not describe themselves as disabled. They often state that the expectations of a neurotypical world can make them feel disabled.

From an employer's point of view, certain neurodivergent conditions may be regarded as a disability under the Equality Act 2010. A useful source of information for employers is the CIPD guide 'Neurodiversity at Work' which was issued in February 2018. It states "Autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and more - for so long pathologised as medical conditions to be mitigated, and even cured - are now seen as natural forms of human neurocognitive variation. What have been termed the 'flip side' strengths of neurodivergent individuals - from problem-solving, to creative insights and visual spatial thinking - are belatedly being recognised. Similarly, thanks to the 'social model' of disability, the realisation has grown that many of the challenges that have previously defined and stereotyped neurodivergent individuals are the result of navigating societies - and workplaces - shaped solely for 'neurotypicals'."

