

NEURODIVERSITY

GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSIVE MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES FOR NEURODIVERGENT INDIVIDUALS



Conferences and meetings are a normal part of the working world and the stress and anxiety surrounded by these events for neurodivergent individuals are often taken for granted.

These spaces can be loud, crowded and highly stressful for individuals who struggle with social communication, meeting new people, sensory processing, and information processing. However, there are simple ways that neurodivergent colleagues, employees and friends can be easily accommodated.

As the saying goes, if you know one autistic person, you know one autistic person. The same applies to neurodivergent individuals. Below are general guidelines that can be helpful for neurodivergent individuals but is by no means a complete picture.

If you want to know how to best support a neurodivergent individual, speak to them about what they need.

Conferences

- **Provide strong instructional material to attendees before the conference to show the layout of the event and timetable of events. Some organisations even provide pictures of specific areas to provide some reassurance ahead of time.**
- **A map or booklet detailing the order of events on the day could be helpful.**
- **Description of speakers including the backgrounds and topics of interest.**
- **Opportunities for neurodivergent individuals to give feedback about their experience on the day.**
- **An optional quiet space for individuals who struggle with noisy environments.**
- **Support staff around the venue who can answer questions and direct individuals to different displays as needed.**
- **Consider that loud music playing in common areas might be a lot for a neurodivergent individual to deal with. They may struggle to focus on displays and stands with loud music playing.**
- **Favour a more neutral or muted colour palette and avoid strong fragrances to minimise sensory overstimulation.**
- **Where possible, run events or meetings in a hybrid format giving people the choice of attending in person, or online.**

Meetings

- **For those who struggle with information processing, meeting material and case studies that may be the subject of the meeting should be provided ahead of time to allow neurodivergent individuals extra time to go through the document and prepare questions.**
- **Find out about your employee, are they anxious about speaking up or joining in in the conversation? If so, they may benefit from writing down questions or queries they come across from examining the documentation beforehand.**
- **Always give a neurodivergent individual enough time to process a question and give you their answer. Avoid answering for them or trying to rush them. They may want to contribute too.**
- **For a long meeting, breaks might be required for neurodivergent individuals.**
- **For remote meetings, the opportunity to keep their camera off may be very beneficial if anxious about large meetings.**

