

PINS: Promoting Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools

Neurodiversity Awareness Raising

Dr Anna Bryant
Senior Educational Psychologist



“Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general” – Harvey Blume (1998)

- **Neurodiversity** is the diversity of human minds, the infinite variation in functioning within our species.
- **Neurodivergence** (the state of being neurodivergent) can be largely or entirely genetic and innate, or it can be largely or entirely produced by brain-altering experience, or some combination of the two.
- **Neurodivergent**, sometimes abbreviated as ND, means having a mind that functions in ways which diverge significantly from the dominant neurotype or societal standards of ‘normal.’
- Co-occurrence is the rule rather than the exception.
- The term, first coined in 1998, situates human cognitive variation in the context of **biodiversity** and the **politics of minority groups**. It arose from the autism rights movement as a challenge to prevailing views that classified neurodevelopmental disorders as inherently pathological.



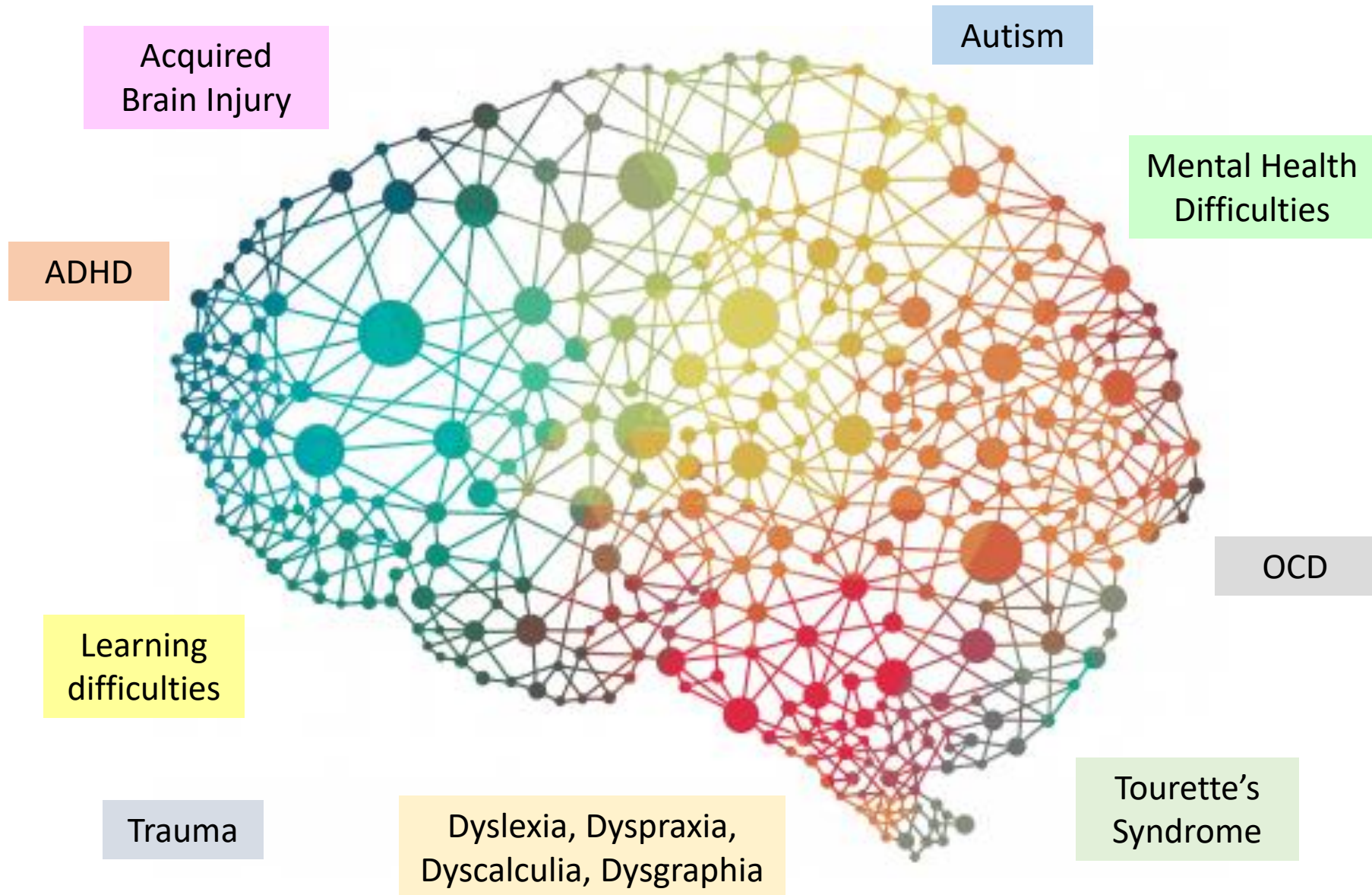
Models of disability

Medical

Social

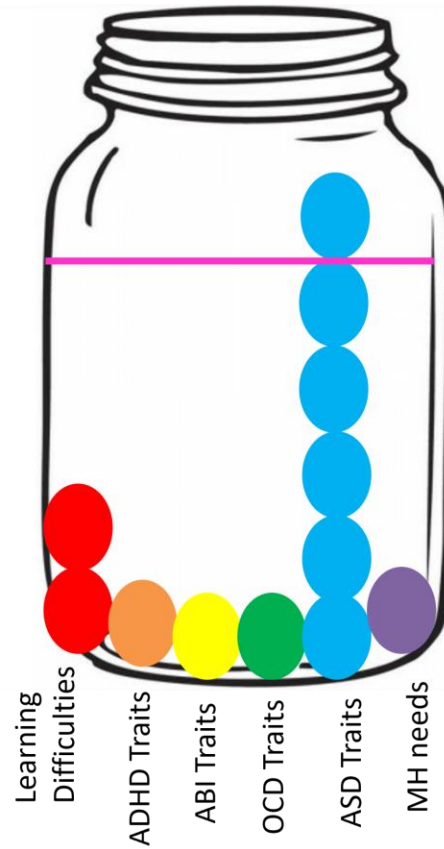
Neurodiversity

What may be included under the Neurodiversity umbrella?



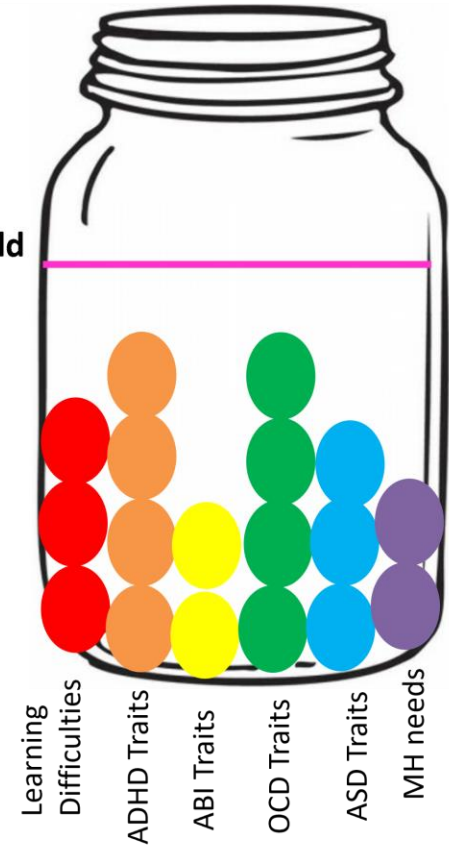
Co-
occurrence is
the rule!

Person A



Diagnosis Threshold

Person B



NHS guidance on terminology

- NHS England guidance: [NHS England » Making information and the words we use accessible](#)
- Autistic/autism rather than ASD or ASC.
- Confirmed diagnosis/identified as autistic/recognised as autistic instead of medical diagnosis.
- Neurodivergent is not to be used instead of autistic - unless that is the person's personal preference – neurodivergent means different things to different people and is a broad umbrella term.
- Neurotypical is a term that some autistic people can find offensive as there is no such thing. Dominant neurotype or minority neurotype are more accurate/acceptable.

Key differences



EXECUTIVE
FUNCTION



EMOTIONAL
REGULATION



SENSORY
INTEGRATION



ANXIETY



SOCIAL AND
COMMUNICATION

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

A group of mental processes that direct our thoughts, actions, and emotions, particularly during active problem solving

4. WORKING MEMORY

Keeping information in mind whilst using it

5. PLANNING & PRIORITISING

The ability to set and plan accordingly to achieve goals

3. FLEXIBLE THINKING

Adjusting behaviour to unexpected changes

6. SELF-MONITORING

Self-awareness of how we are doing in the moment

2. EMOTIONAL CONTROL

Being able to manage and regulate our emotions

7. TASK INITIATION

Taking action to get started on tasks

1. IMPULSE CONTROL

The ability to think before acting

8. ORGANISATION

Ability to keep track of things mentally and physically



Ordinarily Available Provision: Executive Functions

- Short instructions/ chunked information
- Task lists/ planners
- Colour coding/ symbols
- Visual timetables
- Consistent routines
- Monitoring systems e.g. traffic lights
- Additional processing time/ reduce processing load

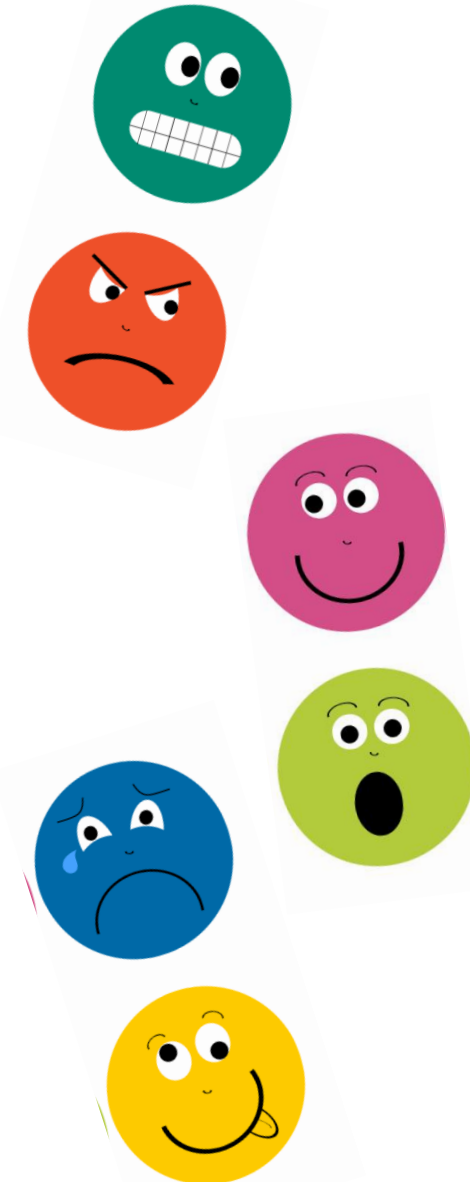
The infographic features a central title 'EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS' in large, colorful letters. Surrounding it are several icons and labels:

- WORKING MEMORY**: Represented by a glowing yellow lightbulb.
- RESPONSE INHIBITION**: Represented by a pink brain.
- EMOTIONAL CONTROL**: Represented by a traffic light.
- SUSTAINED ATTENTION**: Represented by the NHS Frimley logo.
- ORGANIZATION**: Represented by a stack of papers.
- PERSISTENCE**: Represented by a golden trophy.
- TIME MANAGEMENT**: Represented by a red alarm clock.
- PLANNING & PRIORITIZING**: Represented by a calendar.
- FLEXIBILITY**: Represented by a person performing a yoga pose.
- METACOGNITION**: Represented by a profile of a head with a gear.

At the bottom right, there is a logo for 'Bracknell Forest Council' and a watermark for 'chalkboard SUPERHERO'.

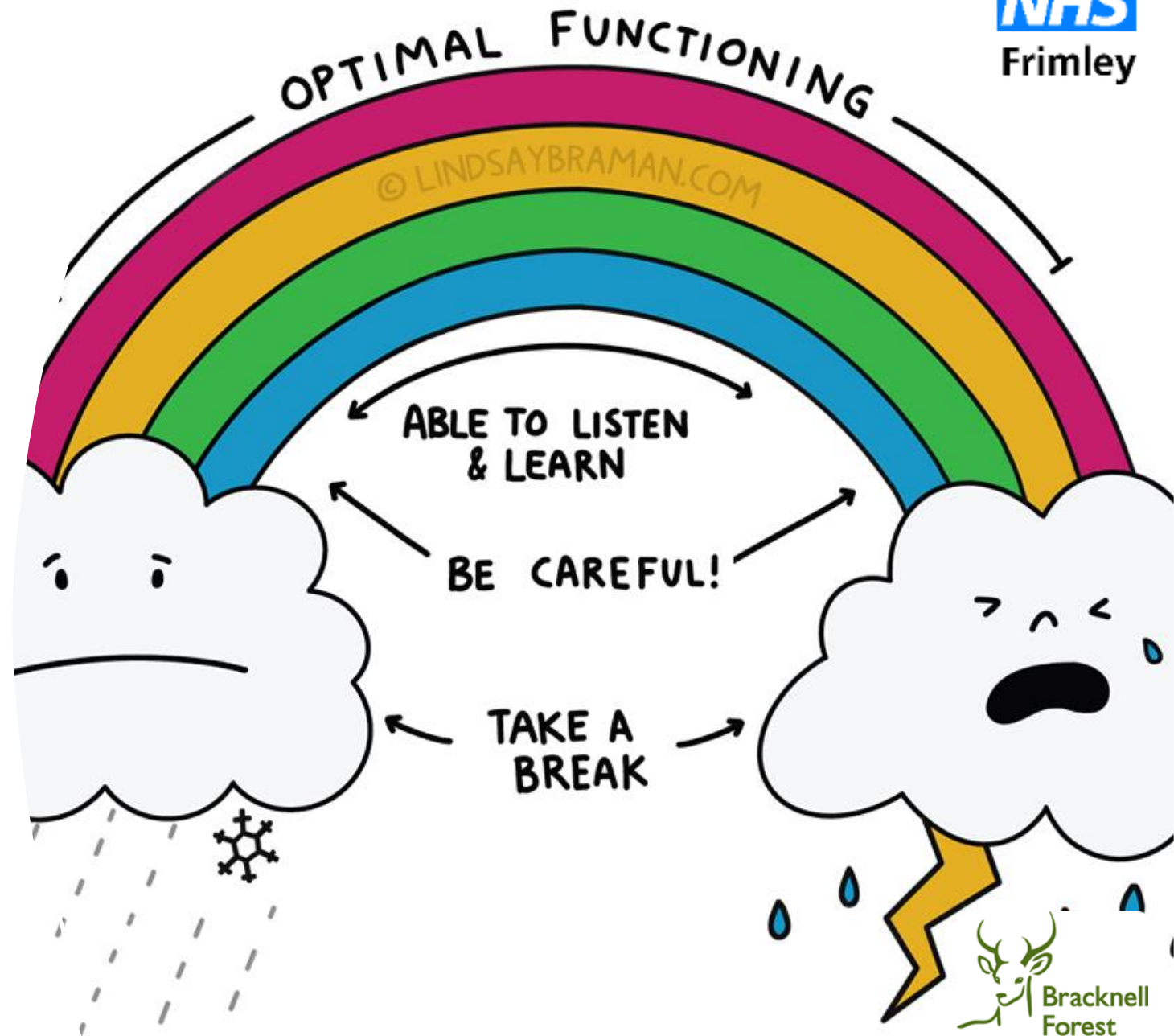
Emotional regulation

- The ability to manage (or regulate) our emotions. This is important as it can influence the way we think, feel and act. Strongly related to children's readiness to learn in the classroom.
- Children learn this skill at a young age when adults co-regulate with them. As they grow up, they can apply these strategies to themselves and begin to self-regulate.
- Neurodivergent individuals can find it harder to maintain a regulated state due to other factors, such as sensory needs which affect their tolerance levels.



Ordinarily Available Provision: Emotional Regulation

- Support coregulation through relationships
- Use Literacy & PSHE to reflect on characters' experiences
- Integrate regulation strategies e.g. mindfulness
- Staff skills, knowledge and expertise e.g. 'spot the signs'



Sensory processing



[Click here to play video](#)

Ordinarily Available Provision: Sensory Processing

- Movement breaks
- Classroom organisation such as access to quiet, calm, distraction free spaces/ workstations
- Seating e.g. standing desks/ wobble cushions
- Consider intensity of lighting/buzzing
- Visual support
- Noise levels, smells
- Flexible approaches to support individual needs e.g. uniform



Anxiety

- Anxiety is found in both neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals.
- Research suggests that 1 in 5 autistic adults experience anxiety with 40% of them having a diagnosable anxiety disorder.
- Common in neurodivergent individuals due to navigating social and sensory environments that might be difficult or challenging in addition to feeling misunderstood or not accepted by others.
- Neurodivergent individuals may mask or camouflage, which further increases their anxiety and has a negative effect upon their mental health.
- Often seen in autistic girls or children experiencing emotionally based school avoidance.

Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

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The desire to control people and events 	Difficulty getting to sleep 	Feeling agitated or angry 
Defiance and other challenging behaviors 	Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports 	Avoiding activities or events (including school) 
Pain like stomachaches and headaches 	Struggling to pay attention and focus 	Intolerance of uncertainty 
Crying and difficulty managing emotions 	Over-planning for situations and events 	Feeling worried about situations or events 

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Ordinarily Available Provision: Anxiety

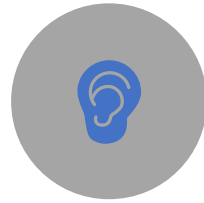


- Prewarn before unexpected change
- Support transitions
- Staff skills, knowledge and expertise e.g. knowledge of individual learning profiles
- A culture of 'growth mindset'
- Alternative methods of contribution

Social communication is complex and covers many areas...



BODY LANGUAGE
INCLUDES THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, GESTURES, MOVEMENTS A PERSON MAKES, AS WELL AS THEIR POSTURE, EYE CONTACT. IT ALSO INCLUDES TOUCH, PROXIMITY AND PERSONAL SPACE.



THE VOICE CAN
COMMUNICATE VARIOUS MEANINGS ACCORDING TO ITS TONE, INTONATION AND VOLUME AS WELL AS STRESS AND EMPHASIS.



CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS
UNDERSTANDING HOW TO INITIATE AND END CONVERSATION, TAKING TURNS, ASKING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS, MAINTAINING THE TOPIC OF AND CHANGING IT APPROPRIATELY, GIVING SUFFICIENT INFORMATION, AND BEING RELEVANT.



SOCIAL CONVENTIONS
INCLUDE POLITENESS, MANNERS AND FOLLOWING THE UNWRITTEN RULES. ABOUT ADAPTING LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION TO THE AUDIENCE AND CONTEXT, INCLUDING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND APPROPRIATENESS.



INTERPERSONAL SKILLS COVER
MAKING FRIENDS AND MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIPS, NEGOTIATION, SORTING DIFFICULTIES AND ASSERTIVENESS.



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IS THE
ABILITY TO RECOGNISE AND IDENTIFY EMOTIONS IN ONESELF AND IN OTHERS, BEING ABLE TO MANAGE THEM AND EXPRESS THEM APPROPRIATELY AND REQUIRES SELF-AWARENESS

Social interaction skills

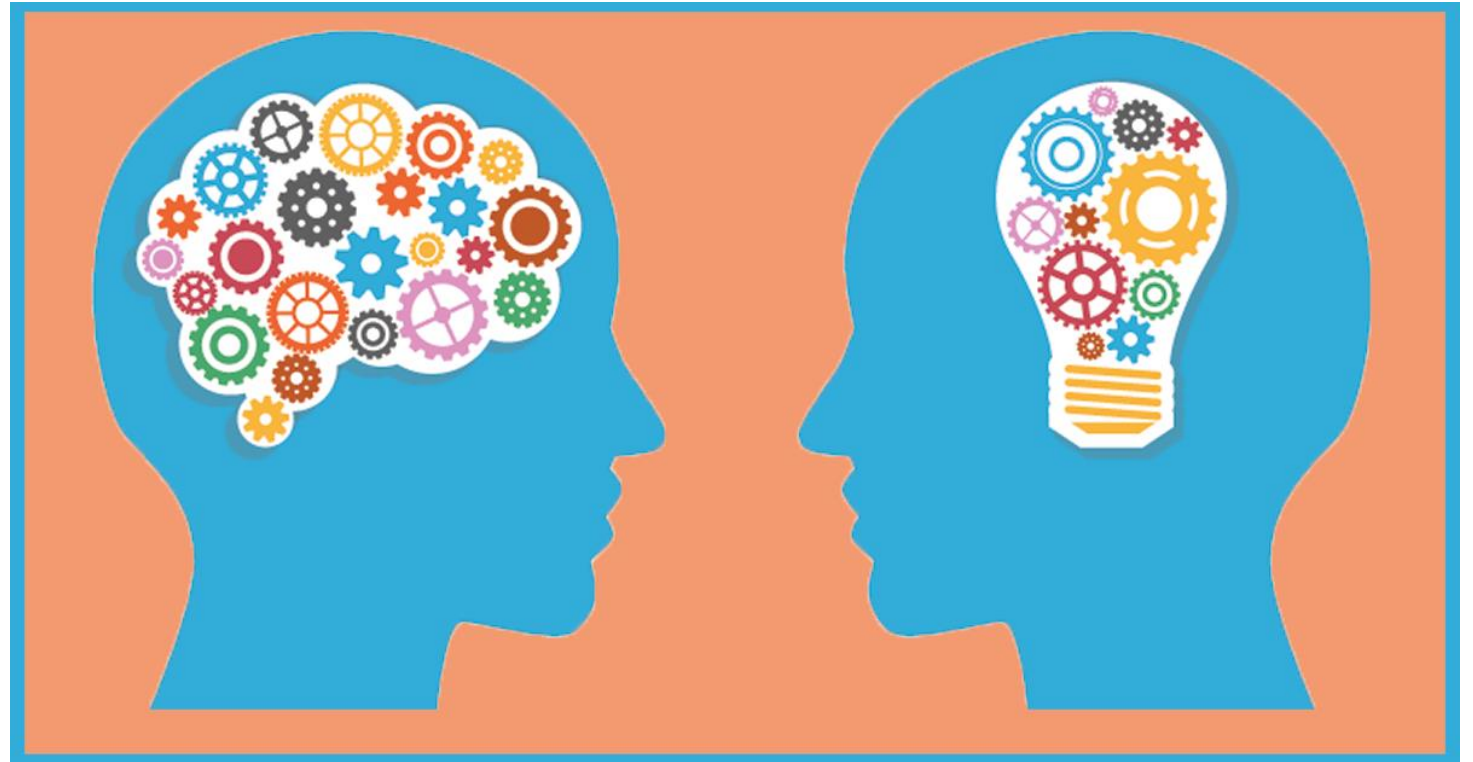
- **Neurodivergent children might find social situations difficult. Other children may appear to know, intuitively, how to communicate and interact with each other**

“It's as if everybody is playing some complicated game and I am the only one who hasn't been told the rules.”

Martian in the playground, C Sainsbury, p8

Ordinarily Available Provision: Social and Communication

- Use of role model communication partners
- Scaffolding/ modelling social rules and understanding
- Use of social stories
- Staff skills, knowledge and expertise e.g. awareness of masking or burnout



Adopting a strengths-based view

Focus upon the strengths within each Neurotype, for example:

- Dyslexia – general inventiveness, creativity and excelling at pattern-spotting
- ADHD – creative thinking, multi-tasking, hyper-focus, calculated risk-taking
- Autism – analytical thinking, deep focus, visual skills, empathy, strong sense of justice and equity



VISUAL SKILLS
visual learning,
detailed focus



ATTENTION TO DETAIL
thorough &
accurate



CREATIVITY
unique way of
thinking, novel
solutions to problems



INTEGRITY
honest &
trustworthy

In summary



The concept of neurodiversity is the acceptance that all humans are different, with unique minds, needs and abilities. Any differences should be acknowledged as just another way of doing things



This approach moves beyond labels such as autism, dyslexia or ADHD and recognises that differences in ability are natural in the human genome and can contain unique gifts and contributions.



As a school governor you can ensure that neurodiverse approaches are integrated into your school's vision.



What are the next steps or development focus for your school?



To find out more about the Bracknell Forest Neurodiversity Project please visit the Local Offer

[Bracknell Forest Directory | Bracknell Neurodiversity Transformation Project \(fsd.org.uk\)](https://www.fsd.org.uk)

Any questions please email

Anna.Bryant@bracknell-forest.gov.uk