

# Neurodivergence in the Physiotherapy Profession

**1 in 7** people are neurodivergent. Neurodivergence means that a person's brain receives and interprets information differently from the typical brain. Neurodivergence can include autism, ADHD and dyslexia and other variations.

So, how did we find out about the experiences of neurodivergent people in physiotherapy? Researchers from the University of Hertfordshire listened to **16 neurodivergent physiotherapists, support workers and students** to learn more about their experiences.

## Barriers

**Poor environments:**

- show a lack of awareness and understanding about the challenges of neurodiversity and neurodivergent people at work and education
- can be judgmental and belittling, making it unsafe for staff to disclose they are neurodivergent
- make it a struggle to qualify
- do not support staff
- make neurodivergent people feel like they have to exhaustively mask (hide their neurodivergence with neurotypical behaviours), leading to them feeling like they do not fit in, or are fake
- increase chances of qualified staff wanting to (reluctantly) leave the profession

## Good practice

**Good environments:**

- support individuals and harness the strengths associated with neurodivergence such as creative clinical care, problem solving and non-linear thinking
- allow for open conversations about how people best work and study
- allow for reasonable adjustments and flexibility with working practices to help neurodivergent people work and study
- recognise the value of diverse thinking and working

## What can teams do?

Managers, teams and educators need to:

raise awareness of the strengths and challenges of neurodivergent team members

create safe spaces for conversations and learning about neurodiversity, and its individualised nature

learn from the good practice that is already happening to make inclusive environments business as usual

Let's have open conversations about neurodivergency in education and the workplace. Find out more about the research at <https://bit.ly/47Nlgzz>