



## **Supporting Line Managers with Personal Development Plans for Neurodivergent Employees in the Workplace**

When hiring Neurodivergent talent into your organisation it is important that from day 1 of their employment you have a structured plan for their growth journey. A good personal development plan for Neurodivergent employees should be jargon free and have direct questions which avoid terms that might be confusing to a person on the Neurodivergent spectrum. Factor in that Neurodivergent people think and interpret language in a literal manner. A good personal development plan for your Neurodivergent employees should be unique to their needs and requirements in the workplace. The personal development plan must also be linked to their performance management appraisals and these assessments must be reviewed and updated as regularly as possible. Too often organisations make the erroneous assumption that a Neurodivergent employee's reasonable adjustments are unlikely to change once they have been implemented. Often, as with neurotypical employees these adjustments will change over the course of their employment for a varying number of reasons. Perhaps stress might see a Neurodivergent employee have issues with fluorescent lighting when previously this wasn't a reasonable adjustment they required. Perhaps they have moved to another part of the office and this change hasn't been managed well and this has affected the quality of their work but reasonable adjustments haven't been factored in here. Additionally, a good personal development plan should allow Neurodivergent employees to answer honestly and truthfully how they feel the employer is supporting them in the

workplace. Take on board the feedback you are given from your Neurodivergent employees. Remember, years 1-3 of your Neurodivergent at work programme are part of your learning and development phase and this is the key period to listen and improve upon what Neurodivergent employees are saying about working for your organisation. See example table below:

**Digital Analyst Example Plan**

What do they want from a career with your organisation?	What skills do they need to get to the next stage of their career?	What challenges might they experience?	How are they currently performing in the workplace?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factor in that it is possible that the Neurodivergent employee might not have defined what a career plan might look like at this time.</li> <li>• Consider with the personal development plan, has you're organisation implemented all the reasonable adjustments that the Neurodivergent employee requested.</li> <li>• Are these reasonable adjustments being reviewed regularly? Are they up to date? Are they in line with the Neurodivergent employee's current needs?</li> <li>• Have you thought about what skills and knowledge they will need to get to the next stage of their career within your organisation? What does the next role up from theirs look like?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about the Neurodivergent employee's current skill set. Where is there a current skills shortfall? What support do you need to give them to get to the next stage of their career with your organisation?</li> <li>• Have they got a workplace buddy or mentor that helps support and advise them in your organisation? If they are going to be successful in your organisation the chances are they going to need a structured support plan tailored to their needs.</li> <li>• Factor in that short term they may just be relieved to be in employment, perhaps they were long-term unemployed or have just left university.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As an organisation your Neurodivergent employees line manager and workplace buddies should be working with them to factor in what challenges they might have to be successful in your organisation.</li> <li>• Are there other employees who struggle to accept their differences? If this is the case has your team had Neurodivergent beliefs, values, and attitudes training? Has the other employee being spoken to about this matter? Are they aware that the colleague they have an issue with is Neurodivergent?</li> <li>• Are the reasonable adjustments they need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When reflecting on an Neurodivergent employee's personal development. Always stress the positives first.</li> <li>• Factor in have performance meetings been regular, consistent, and well structured. Informal catchups are not helpful for Neurodivergent employees who thrive of certainty, structure, and routine in the workplace.</li> <li>• Have reasonable adjustments being constantly reviewed and updated accordingly. It is no good having reasonable adjustments that are out of date and no longer relevant to the</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factor in that performance reviews should where relevant be held in quiet spaces. Noisy open plan areas can be stressful for some Neurodivergent employees.</li> <li>• Give out information on what the Neurodivergent employee should expect from the performance review.</li> <li>• Be specific on length of time, structure and plan of the review will also help reduce anxiety, stress, and uncertainty for a Neurodivergent employee.</li> <li>• Is the performance review process, with clear expectations and goals outlined.</li> <li>• Post review check understanding and debrief where a Neurodivergent employee is unsure or uncertain of what was discussed.</li> <li>• Ensure that line managers actively listen and ask what support their Neurodivergent employees might need in the workplace.</li> <li>• The better the conversation between line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore their career options with them but don't force them to come up with a career plan until it is something they want to commit to.</li> <li>• Factor in that Neurodivergent people struggle with hypothetical questions. So, consider what language you use when implementing a personal development plan for them.</li> <li>• Perhaps they aren't sure what a career with your organisation looks like. As an organisation your line managers should be sitting down with your Neurodivergent employees to understand their motivations for coming to work and their strengths and weaknesses in the workplace.</li> </ul>	<p>consistent and being constantly reviewed at performance appraisals?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is their work quality in line with your organisations expectations? If not are their line manager and workplace buddy helping facilitate with improvements in work quality?</li> <li>• Are they enjoying their job? Do they see a career future with your organisation? This is very important to know because if they aren't this could be a considerable blocker to them progressing in your organisation.</li> <li>• Are they coping with the pressure and high workloads in their current role? If not you might want to consider working with them to make their workload more manageable before looking at career progression.</li> <li>• Is change for an Neurodivergent</li> </ul>	<p>Neurodivergent employee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have they got a workplace buddy? This is very important for the development in your organisation?</li> <li>• When stressing areas of improvement emphasis, the importance of learning opportunities and try to avoid focusing the areas of improvement in a negative manner.</li> <li>• Explain that everyone makes mistakes and that it is an expected part of the job.</li> <li>• Develop rules to follow in the future to prevent similar mistakes from occurring.</li> <li>• Don't skip feedback sessions even if the feedback is positive. There are always opportunities to improve and a good line manager will ensure that these sessions will happen regardless.</li> </ul>
--	---	--	---

<p>managers and Neurodivergent employees the better the working relationships, which can ultimately drive change in the business.</p>		<p>employee being appropriately managed? Workplace change can be hugely stressful for an Neurodivergent employee and impinge upon the quality of their work. Factor in Neurodivergent employees when any workplace changes arise.</p>	
---	--	---	--