

# Neurodiversity News

01 October 2024



## Welcome to our First Neurodiversity News

Some of you have been receiving weekly emails updating you on all things neurodiversity but from now on, much of this information will be condensed into a Newsletter, which will be published every 2 months.



Welcome to this first Neurodiversity Newsletter packed with information on neurodiversity as well as news, training opportunities, resources and research. If there is anything you would like included in upcoming newsletters, please do not hesitate to contact me (my email address is at the end of this newsletter).

## What Is Neurodiversity?



Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits. 'Neurodiversity' refers to the natural diversity in all human brains.

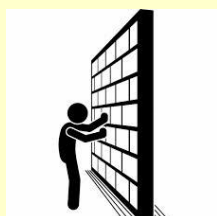
Neurodivergence is the term for when someone's brain processes, learns, and/or behaves differently from what is considered "typical". Some neurodivergent conditions include:

- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia/Developmental Co-ordination Disorder
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism
- Tourette's

These conditions very often co-occur and many symptoms overlap. A lack of awareness of co-morbidity may result in an emphasis on just one marked aspect of the person's difficulties

## Neurodiversity Affirmative

If we are unaware of neurodivergent needs, we can create barriers to our services. It is easy to see that if you are in a wheelchair and you are asked to go upstairs, you are going to struggle. This is easy to visualize. It is not so easy to visualise the challenges for those who are neurodivergent



- sensory barriers such as noise or lighting
- communication barriers such as only being able to contact a service by phonecall as this does not meet the communication needs of those who struggle to make phone calls
- attitudinal barriers such as perceptions around different neurotypes

These barriers can make it impossible or very difficult for neurodivergent individuals to access services but that is what's happening with the brains of those who are neurodivergent. Their brain is struggling to get up those stairs, and then they are losing out. They are disabled by barriers in society, which work in combination with their diagnosis to restrict their access and rights.

Instead of expecting neurodivergent individuals to conform to an outdated 'one size fits all' model, neuro-affirmative services should actively support all individuals for their differences, where everybody belongs. Creating a neuro-affirmative environment does not mean taking on an overwhelming renovation, it just involves thinking of the needs of the individuals who fill the space and finding small ways to accommodate them. **Small changes can make a big difference**

## Being Neuro-Affirmative in Belfast Trust

Belfast Trust promotes neuro-inclusivity in many ways. We are highlighting some of those ways in this first edition of the Neurodiversity News:



- The Belfast Autism Forum
- Neurodiversity Lead
- Neurodiversity Awareness Training
- Support for Managers
- Literacy Software Support for Belfast Trust Staff
- The Belfast Adult Autism Advisory Service

## The Belfast Autism Forum

The Belfast Autism Forum is a collaborative forum that aims to facilitate improved partnership working in Belfast to better support autistic children and adults and their

families. Membership of the forum is currently open to all including those in the Public Sector, Community and Voluntary sector, Private Sector and autistic individuals and families. We have an autistic co-chair, vice-chair and parent representatives. We also have representatives from health, education, PSNI, NIHE, Belfast City Council, Civil Service, SpecialisterneNI, National Autistic Society, Autism NI, Barnardos, Cedar and the Now Project as well as many others. Through its work the Belfast Autism Forum seeks to

- Promote awareness and better understanding of the challenges faced by people with autism and the changing nature of these challenges over their lifetime;
- Promote support for autistic people, their families and carers to become well informed about accessing the services they need;
- Encourage inclusion of people with autism in all aspects of normal life.
- Ensure public and personal involvement.

### Neurodiversity Lead for Psychological Services

With the increasing number of neurodivergent individuals both using and delivering the services of Belfast Trust, Dr Frances Beagon a Consultant Clinical Psychologist, who has significant clinical experience of working with neurodivergent individuals and with extensive experience of leading service change has been appointed as Lead for Neurodiversity. Frances supports the transformation of services for neurodivergent individuals through training, consultation and service development.

### Neurodiversity Awareness Training



Psychological Services has been providing Neurodiversity Awareness Training sessions to staff within Children's Services - this training has been developed in conjunction with neurodivergent individuals and incorporates the lived experiences of neurodivergent parents and children because every time we have an opportunity to hear someone else's story we understand more about how everyone is different.

The neurodiversity awareness training has been delivered to staff with various experience and skills, some newly appointed to their role and some long-standing, highly experienced members of staff. All have been eager to know more and promote neuro-affirmative practice in their own area of expertise.

Neurodiversity Training for Adult Services is currently in development.

It is hoped that the impact of this employee training is akin to a pebble dropped into a calm pond—it creates ripples that spread far beyond the initial point of contact.

## Neurodiversity – Support for Managers

An exciting new service has been co-developed between Occupational Health and Human Resources in Belfast Trust to provide assistance to managers who are supporting neurodivergent staff. Managers can gain guidance on best practise and sources of support Trust-wide and with external partner organisations including Autism NI, Cedar Foundation, Access to Work Scheme and Workable. Clinics are held via MS Teams on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month. Clinics last no longer than 30 minutes. This support does not replace the normal Occupational Health Management Referral process. Managers can book one of these clinics by emailing [OHSENQUIRIES@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:OHSENQUIRIES@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

## Literacy Software Support for Belfast Trust Staff

The Equality and Planning Team is delighted to announce the launch of a **new toolkit** for 'Read&Write' - the literacy software support for staff. Belfast Trust is the only Trust in NI that has the software networked which means any member of staff can **freely access** it for themselves and/or their families. Read&Write software is the software that most Universities use to support students who are dyslexic or autistic, have challenges with concentration, who are visually impaired or if English is not their first language.

- Staff do not need a diagnosis to access the software – many people find it helps with productivity.
- Staff do not have to disclose that they are having a difficulty to access the software

### Read&Write Support for Trust Staff: Toolkit & Guidance

More information can be found on The LOOP via Belfast Trust intranet: [Literacy Support Software \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

## The Belfast Adult Autism Advisory Service (BAAAS)



The BAAAS is a multi-agency team providing advice and guidance to individuals aged 16 years and over who have a diagnosis of autism and for those who support them, who live in the Belfast Trust Area. The key aims are to, provide a safe and friendly place for individuals to speak to someone who understands autism and provide them with on-the-day information to access a range of appropriate services. This service is funded by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

The BAAS runs weekly and contact can take place face to face, online, email or by phone

BAAAS provides opportunities to engage with trained and experienced health and community professionals who can provide advice and guidance either on the day or through arranged appointments in many areas including:

- Housing
- Social Security Benefits
- Careers
- Employment
- Local community groups/activities
- Health information
- Carer support
- Education & Training

## We Can All Make a Difference



Neurodivergent conditions tend to co-occur rather than exist as individual conditions. Co-morbidity is often the rule rather than the exception

- Dyslexia and dyspraxia have a co-morbidity rate of 60-70%
- 40-45% of children with dyspraxia would meet the diagnostic criteria for ADHD, ASD or Dyslexia
- 60% of those with dyscalculia have been found to also have dyslexia

Font type, size, colour and page background all have a significant impact on readability for those with dyslexia, a visual impairment, visual stress, older people etc. Arial 12 is more readable than others. It has also been found that if text is dark and on a warm yellow background it increases readability. Small changes can make big differences. By making mindful decisions, we can create an experience that is accessible to as large an audience as possible. [#neurodiversity](#) [#accessibilityforall](#)

Further information can be accessed here:

[Good Background Colors for Readers: A Study of People with and without Dyslexia \(researchgate.net\)](#)

[\[PDF\] Good Background Colors for Readers: A Study of People with and without Dyslexia | Semantic Scholar](#)

[\(PDF\) The Relation between Physiological Parameters and Colour Modifications in Text Background and Overlay during Reading in Children with and without Dyslexia \(researchgate.net\)](#)

[The Effect of Page Color on Reading Speed and Comprehension \(researchgate.net\)](#)

## Being Neuroaffirmative at Work and at Home



### Being Neuroaffirmative at Work

[Neurodiversity in the Workplace | Labour Relations Agency - Official \(lra.org.uk\)](#)

### Being Neuroaffirmative at Home

[How Do We Create a Neurodiversity-affirming Family Environment?](#)

[\(attwoodandgarnettevents.com\)](#)



## Belfast News

### Neurodiversity Lead in Belfast Trust



Dr Frances Beagon, Consultant Psychologist has been appointed as Neurodiversity Lead for Psychological Services. In this new role for the Trust, Frances has been building connections with other services, agencies and service users, with the recognition that lived experience of different neurotypes is beneficial to Belfast Trust as a whole. In her role, Frances seeks to improve both service user experience and service delivery for patients and families. Frances offers training to staff, provides clinical consultations, consults on neuro-inclusive environments, co-chairs the Belfast Autism

Forum, links with services across the Trust, circulates the latest neurodiversity news and research and meets with neurodivergent staff and service users.

### Northern Ireland's First Independent Autism Reviewer.



The Department of Health has appointed Northern Ireland's first independent autism reviewer. Ema Cubitt was selected for the role following a public appointment competition and took up office in September for a five-year period.

The reviewer's role, which is independent of Stormont departments, will include monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the autism strategy. It will also include reviewing the adequacy of

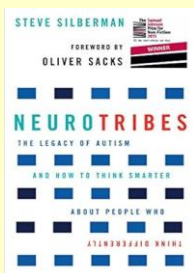
services provided to autistic people, their families and carers across government departments, public bodies and the health and social care sector.

- [Independent Autism Reviewer appointed | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)



## Elsewhere in the News

- [NHS appoints director for mental health and neurodiversity | Health Business \(healthbusinessuk.net\)](#)
- [Calls for more specialist educational support as autism diagnoses in Jersey rise | ITV News Channel](#)
- [Return to office mandate: has Amazon signalled the start of the post-diversity era? - Personnel Today](#)
- [Neurodiversity gets a corporate champion | Financial Times \(ft.com\)](#)
- [Neurodiversity Ireland launches first Inclusive Educator Awards \(rte.ie\)](#)
- [Cambridgeshire Police named disability leader for creating inclusive working environment \(peterboroughtoday.co.uk\)](#)
- <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/autistic-man-to-receive-20000-from-nhs-after-refusal-of-job-interview-adjustments/>
- [Leeds neurodiversity event moved to meet 'unprecedented' demand - BBC News](#)
- [How neurodiversity took over the Edinburgh Fringe | The Spectator](#)



## Neurodiversity Books

Many of you have probably read the book *NeuroTribes* by Steve Silberman. Sadly, Steve died during the summer (August 2024). [When America's Views on Autism Started to Change - The Atlantic](#)

- Winner of the Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction
- Shortlisted for the Wellcome Book Prize
- Shortlisted for the MJA Health Book of the Year Award
- Shortlisted for the BMA Medical Book Awards
- A Sunday Times and New York Times bestseller

Steve was well known for *NeuroTribes* as “it helped bring the concept of neurodivergence—that the human brain simply works in different ways, rather than one “correct way” – into the national conversation.”

Neurotribes Reviews:

- [NeuroTribes by Steve Silberman review – an enlightened take on autism and difference | Health, mind and body books | The Guardian](#)
- [Neurotribes review – the evolution of our understanding of autism | Health, mind and body books | The Guardian](#)

## Awareness Videos



### Amazing Things Happen

An animation, which gives an uplifting introduction to autism for young non-autistic audiences, aiming to raise awareness, understanding and tolerance in future generations.

- [Amazing Things Happen - by Alexander Amelines - YouTube](#)

### Walk in My Shoes

An animation aims to increase understanding of neurodiversity and reflects Erin's experiences at the age of 14.

<https://www.donaldsons.org.uk/walk-in-my-shoes/>

## Podcasts

- [The Yellow Ladybugs Podcast](#)



The Yellow Ladybugs Podcast invites #actuallyautistic people to talk about their journey, to help you with yours. Join in the conversation and explore the world of autistic girls, women and gender diverse individuals, and the often misunderstood and ignored internalised autistic experience. [Yellow Ladybugs](#)

- [The Late Discovered Club – UK Podcasts \(uk-podcasts.co.uk\)](#) podcast by Catherine Asta who received her diagnosis of Autism at the age of 42.



The aim of the podcast is to give late-discovered autistic women a voice, with self-discovery stories and compassionate conversations. Ranked by Feedspot as the number 1 Best Female Autism Podcasts in the world in 2023.

[The Late Discovered Club Podcast Series – Apple Podcasts](#)



## Neurodiversity Papers

### Employment

Physical workplace adjustments to support neurodivergent workers:  
A systematic review

[Physical workplace adjustments to support neurodivergent workers: A systematic review - Weber - 2024 - Applied Psychology - Wiley Online Library](#)

Factors shaping the employment outcomes of neurodivergent and neurotypical people: Exploring the role of flexible and homeworking practices

[Factors shaping the employment outcomes of neurodivergent and neurotypical people: Exploring the role of flexible and homeworking practices - Branicki - Human Resource Management - Wiley Online Library](#)

### Health and Social Care

Predictors of Health-Related Quality of Life in Neurodivergent Children: A Systematic Review

[Predictors of Health-Related Quality of Life in Neurodivergent Children: A Systematic Review | Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review \(springer.com\)](#)

Neurodiversity in the Healthcare Profession

[Neurodiversity in the healthcare profession | Postgraduate Medical Journal | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)

### Education

Experiences of Disabled and Neurodivergent Faculty in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review

[Experiences of Disabled and Neurodivergent Faculty in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review in: Journal of Disability Studies in Education - Ahead of print \(brill.com\)](#)

## GET INVOLVED

Are you an Education Professional supporting parents/children from ethnic minority groups with neurodevelopmental disorders? The EXPAND project, funded by the NIHR, is looking to hear from you, complete their survey or join their online focus groups



The EXPAND project (Exploring the EXperiences of Accessing services and understanding Neurodevelopmental Disorders for ethnic minorities in England) are looking to understand the experience of families from BAME communities who have a child with a diagnosed or suspected diagnosis of a neurodevelopmental disorder, e.g. autism, ADHD, OCD, Tourette's. They are conducting a series of short interviews, online focus groups and surveys to gather insights.

[learn more about the project on the Institute website.](#)

If you are interested, please contact [EXPAND@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:EXPAND@nottingham.ac.uk)



## Upcoming Events

### FILM

<https://queensfilmtheatre.com/Whats-On/What-I-Dont-Know-About-Autism>

#### **Bounce 2024: What I (Don't) Know About Autism + Discussion** **Showing: 06 October 2024**

This screening of the 2021 play What I (Don't) Know About Autism is a sometimes comic, sometimes heart-breaking journey into the world of autism, with performances by autistic and non-autistic actors.

### CONFERENCES

- **FREE Virtual SEN Conference for Parents - 9 October 2024**  
'Strategies, Support and Success for Our Children' where neurodiversity experts will share advice and guidance on empowering children.  
Sign-up here: <https://pages.witherslackgroup.co.uk/virtual-conference-oct24>
- **Online Annual ADHD Conference – 10 October 2024**  
**Tickets €10**  
ADHD Ireland and the ADHD Foundation / Neurodiversity Charity collaboration is back to facilitate the largest ADHD conference in Europe, which will take place virtually on October 10, 2024.



This forward-thinking conference, which will bring together global experts, leaders, and thinkers, is for all those affected by ADHD and will seek to push for progress. We will lead insightful and inclusive discussions, exploring what needs to be done to enable those with ADHD to thrive.

[ADHD International Virtual Conference 2024 - ADHD Ireland](#)

- **The Northern Ireland Neurodiversity in the Workplace Conference 2025 Belfast**

5 February 2025, 9:00am - 4:00pm

[| IGPP](#)

## LECTURES/WEBINARS

### "ADHD symptoms aren't 'hidden' they are misinterpreted" – 30 October 2024

FREE: Registration is now open for this year's Salvesen Lecture, which will take place on Wednesday 30th October at 6.00pm. Associate Professor [Lotta Borg Skoglund](#) from Upsala University, Sweden, will deliver her talk: "*ADHD symptoms aren't 'hidden' they are misinterpreted*". In this presentation, Lotta will walk you through the neuroscience and epidemiology behind female ADHD, addressing key knowledge gaps associated with vulnerable hormonal periods across the female reproductive life, and suggest what needs to be done.

You can register for the [online link here](#). The lecture is free and open to the general public.

## TRAINING

- **Neurodiversity in Universities and FE Colleges – beginning 2 October 2024**

A 10-week series of 90-minute live-streamed training seminars commencing 2 October 2024.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/fe-and-he-training-package-20242025-3358129>

- **Understanding Autism in the Workplace – 15 October 2024**

Aimed at managers and colleagues, this course enhances understanding of autism and builds confidence in creating supportive environments through reasonable adjustments.

[Understanding autism in the workplace](#)

- **The Profile of Abilities in Autistic Girls – Thursday 10 October 2024 9am – 12noon**

Tony Attwood will describe the strengths and abilities commonly experienced by autistic girls, as well as key challenges, including self-understanding, developing an authentic self, navigating school, developing relationships whilst staying true to oneself, self-advocacy. Tony will also discuss co-morbidity with issues of mental health including; ADHD, anxiety, depression, autistic burnout and eating disorders. [The profile of abilities in Autistic girls](#)

- **Autism and Family Dynamics– Thursday 17 October 9am – 12noon**

Tony Attwood will look at key aspects of life that play an integral role in family life to understand how autism can affect different members of a family in different ways. The degree of challenge may vary depending on the severity of the autism, but the autism-related issues that families deal with are similar. This talk will also look at stress management for all members of the family with practical tips and advice for parents/carers and siblings. [Autism and Family Dynamics](#) – Thursday 17 October 9am – 12noon

- **Fostering Neurodiversity in the Workplace – multiple dates available**

This 1-day **online** course will give you the information, summary knowledge and the ability to have meaningful discussions with any person with a Neurodivergent condition so that you can support them in the most effective manner possible, enabling them to carry out their role without anxiety or issue. Click here:

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnews.gov-pd.co.uk%2F%2F12hZTmxyHhcs3SnWTN820uqA6UV0&data=05%7C02%7CFrances.Beagon%40belfasttrust.hscni.net%7C5f0de32a527a4423a85308dcddf0d223%7C9c9a30ded8d74aa496004be7625ff6c5%7C0%7C0%7C638629273596543429%7CUnknwn%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikl1haWwiLCJXVC16Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=94kaljoyFMWRVnh1Zz9MpbqZUym7b6xnkdr3qW8zKLQ%3D&reserved=0>

## October is ADHD Awareness Month



October is ADHD Awareness Month. The month-long campaign aims to educate the public, reduce stigma, and provide support to individuals and families affected by ADHD. It also highlights the importance of early diagnosis, effective treatment, and understanding the challenges faced by those with ADHD. This year's theme is "Moving Forward with ADHD." [ADHD Awareness Month – ADHD Europe](#)

### Support pages:

AADD-UK Has a list of support groups for parents and carers across the UK. [Support Groups \(Full List\)](#) | [AADD-UK \(aadduk.org\)](#)

ADHD UK has resources on diagnosis, education and employment. [ADHD UK - Homepage - ADHD UK](#)

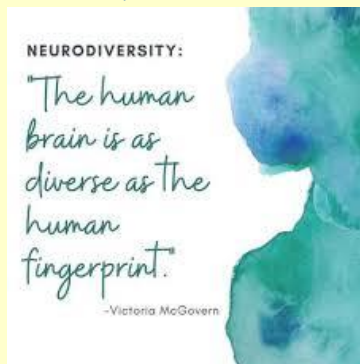
ADHD Foundation is an integrated health and education service [Home - ADHD Foundation : ADHD Foundation](#)



We would love to hear from you if you have any items you want included in future newsletters or if you have any requests for topics of interest. Just get in touch via email.

Email: [Frances.Beagon@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:Frances.Beagon@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

### Final Quote



**Dr Frances P. Beagon**

**Consultant Clinical Psychologist**

**Neurodiversity Lead for Psychological Services**

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