

Inclusive Recruitment Processes for Neurodivergent Individuals

The traditional recruitment process relies heavily on a strong CV, work history and social and communication skills, so neurodivergent candidates are more likely than others to struggle. Advocacy is not a strength for many neurodivergent individuals and find it hard to market their skills and attributes in an interview, even if they have all the right capabilities and competencies.

Specific struggles may include but are not limited to the following:

- Maintaining appropriate eye contact and non-verbal body language,
- Understanding how to and knowing how to initiate and maintain conversations,
- Articulating their thoughts and explaining their problem solving and thinking,
- Considering hypothetical scenarios,
- Understanding how much or little information needs to be given specifically if questions are open and unspecific,
- Understanding the appropriate level of formality to use in conversations.

This table demonstrates simple adjustments to a traditional interview process.

Comparative Assessment Process	Inclusive Process for ND People
Three Capacity-Based Assessments	
3-Panel behavioural interview Standardised set of questions Traditional panel interview with long table set up	2-Panel interview Hiring Manager & Independent assessor Customised interview questions to candidate's previous experience Candidate provided interview questions prior to interview to support auditory processing delays and ensure more accurate demonstration of skill set. Interview to be conducted in a round table setting or via video link
Observed work sample undertaken during interview	Work sample completed prior to interview at home. Interview questions pertained to specific work samples.
Timed online testing completed prior to interview	Use of the MYX (Xceptional Academy) online skills assessment.

Making reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process is critical in allowing many neurodivergent individuals to demonstrate their skills and capabilities. The following adjustments can be made however, it is always important to 'ATP' Ask the Person with the candidate beforehand.

These considerations and adjustments will have a positive impact on your recruitment process.

The Candidate Journey

1. **Ensure the application process is positive** and follows the principle of universal design principles. The change made to this recruitment process can positively impact all applications.
2. **Provide a clear channel for communication** with one contact within your organisation and ask individuals what accommodations would work best for them.
3. **Ask candidates to communicate any required adjustments to the recruitment process** by providing a request statement in the job advert
4. **Set expectations of the recruitment process** including assessment and interview process, plus timelines for the process. This will reduce anxiety and help candidates understand what is expected of them.
5. **Ask applicants to demonstrate their skills** instead of discussing or explaining their skill set.
6. **Provide logistical advice for applicants.** Include location of interview with instructions to find the building (including visuals), the dress code and what to bring.

Assessment Process

1. **Make the recruitment process experiential and active** by having the individual perform a role-relevant task. Consider assessing an applicant's abilities and skills through practical tasks, work samples, online assessment, and questionnaires.
2. **Avoid timed assessments.** Many neurodivergent people report the added pressure of time restraints negatively impact their ability to think and demonstrate their skills.
3. **Allow the applicant to complete assessments at home** in their own time.
4. **Consider using a work preferences questionnaire** to further understand the applicant's preferred method of working.

Interview Best Practice

1. **Hold interviews in an environment which is distraction free, has natural light and is welcoming.** A non-threatening round table discussion is best. Consider using a video link to allow the individual to be in a controlled environment they are comfortable in.
2. **Be aware of possible sensory sensitivities** which negatively impact attention and focus.
 - Check in with the candidate before the interview to identify specific intolerances/difficulties.
 - Pre-screen the interview environment for potential distractions (e.g. distinct scents, noises, fluorescent lighting)
 - Be mindful of lotions, colognes, stationary smells such as markers, or silent buzzing or phones
 - During the interview, if the interviewer notices the candidate is distracted, directly ask "Is there something I can do to make you more comfortable?"

3. **Small interview panel;** maximum 2 people
4. **Questions should be clear with simple and specific language and focus on skills and ability to demonstrate knowledge,** for example “In your course, did you do data-analysis?” and then follow up with “What process or principle did you use to perform data analysis”
 - Avoid jargon or figurative language. For example, “How did you find the training course/your last job?” may warrant a response such as “I looked on the internet”, “I found it on a map.”
 - Avoid motivational and general questions such as “Tell me about your greatest strength”
5. **Adjust the behavioural interview process** which relies on the principle of past behaviour to predict current and future behaviour.
 - Research shows that working-aged neurodivergent individuals are significantly less likely to have held one or more jobs thereby limiting their ability to share examples of their experience. An amendment to the process may be as follows. Instead of asking “Tell me about a time you were required to solve a problem”, ask “Think back to your job at XXXXX. Can you tell us how you fixed the errors you found in the data?” This can only be done by reviewing the specifics of each candidate’s CV
5. **Provide context to questions you will be asking.** For example, instead of asking “Are you willing to move to XXXXX at the end of the year?”, state “In November of this year, the whole organisation will be required to relocate to XXXXXX. Are you willing to do this?”
 - Be prepared to repeat and rephrase questions in a direct manner and allow ample time for a response. Be prepared for the candidate to ask for the questions to be rephrased to better their understanding. This occurs as neurodivergent individuals are often coached to use their “filters” to temper their often very frank and brutally honest perspective and expression. Therefore, the candidate may be using this time to filter their response.
6. **Consider providing the interview questions prior to the interview.** Many neurodivergent individuals are visual thinkers and can have delay in auditory processing speed which is exacerbated in stressful situations. By providing questions 60 mins before the interview will assist with the interviewing process and provide you with a greater understanding of their knowledge, thinking and suitability.
7. **Minimise face to face interview to one.** If more than one interview is necessary, consider using a video link instead.