

INDUSTRY MENTORSHIP: SUPPORTING NEURODIVERGENT YOUNG PEOPLE

PLACED's approach to neurodiversity emphasises a lived experience approach that views disability through a social model rather than a medical one. This document covers a broad scope of neurological differences and encourages compassionate and curious engagement from our cohort, sponsors and ambassadors.

Understanding neurodiversity and supporting neurodivergent individuals

- Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in the human brain that leads to differences in how people think and behave
- The term 'neurodiverse' describes the abstract concept of diversity within a range of neurocognitive styles. A person or group would not, in a grammatical sense, be described as 'neurodiverse'
- The term 'neurodivergent' describes a person or group whose ways of thinking differ significantly from typical neurocognitive style. PLACED encourages the use of 'neurodivergent' as an identity label and emphasises that neurodivergence is not limited to specific diagnoses
- Around 15–20% of the UK population are neurodivergent, and this document discusses the challenges faced by this group, such as higher rates of exclusion, unemployment, and loneliness
- PLACED encourage the use of inclusive language and the social model of disability to better understand and support neurodivergent individuals
- PLACED stress the value and strengths of neurodiversity and reminded our cohort, sponsors, and ambassadors that understanding and addressing their specific challenges can help individuals access and develop their strengths

Sensory Experiences, Executive Function, and ADHD Strategies

- Some of the main areas where neurodivergence has an impact on people are: sensory experiences, executive function, and working memory
- When seeking to understand how this might be experienced, it is helpful to reflect on one's own sensory experiences and consider the challenges these can present. For instance, becoming overwhelmed by noise in a crowded space. These challenges, which may be occasional for the majority of people, are often heightened or more frequent for those who are neurodivergent or have experienced trauma

- Another common area of impact is on executive function, which the training likened to 'the CEO of the brain'. Executive function is something which develops over time and is one of the most common areas of difficulty for people with ADHD
- There are various strategies for supporting individuals with ADHD, such as creating routines and reducing distractions, and emphasising the importance of cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control
- PLACED advocates for the expansion of accommodations in the workplace and education system to better support neurodiverse individuals and foster innovation and inclusion

Adapting Approaches for Neurodiverse Mentees

- PLACED stress the importance of adapting approaches when working with young people and mentees in the built environment, particularly those with neurodiverse backgrounds
- It highlighted the need for understanding individual needs, creating supportive environments, and empowering young people and mentees to navigate challenges in a neurotypical world
- PLACED put a strong emphasis on the importance of continued conversation, resources, and building a supportive network