hcrg Care Group

Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Services

Understanding Neurodiversity– supporting neurodivergent children & young people

Developed for the Essex Partnership for Neurodiversity in Schools Project in partnership with Norfolk & Suffolk Foundation Trust

Training approved October 2025

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

Understanding Neurodiversity

Supporting neurodivergent children & young people

Essex Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools - Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Services

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

Understanding Neurodiversity

This workshop was developed for the Essex Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools Project 2024-25 by the Psychology In Schools Team at Norfolk & Suffolk Foundation Trust

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

Understanding Neurodiversity

- What is neurodiversity?
- Neurodevelopmental diagnoses
- Co-occurring challenges
- Talking to children about neurodiversity
- Ensuring a consistent approach
- Further support and resources

How would you rate your knowledge of childhood neurodiversity?

Low (1) **High (10)**

What is Neurodiversity?

Brain injury

Down's Syndrome

ADHD

Tourette's

Dyslexia

Dyscalculia

Dysgraphia

Autism

Developmental coordination disorder

Developmental Language disorder

Learning disability

hcrg Care Group

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

Language is a personal choice

- Remember that words are powerful. Using the right words is respectful to people and helps show others how to be respectful too.

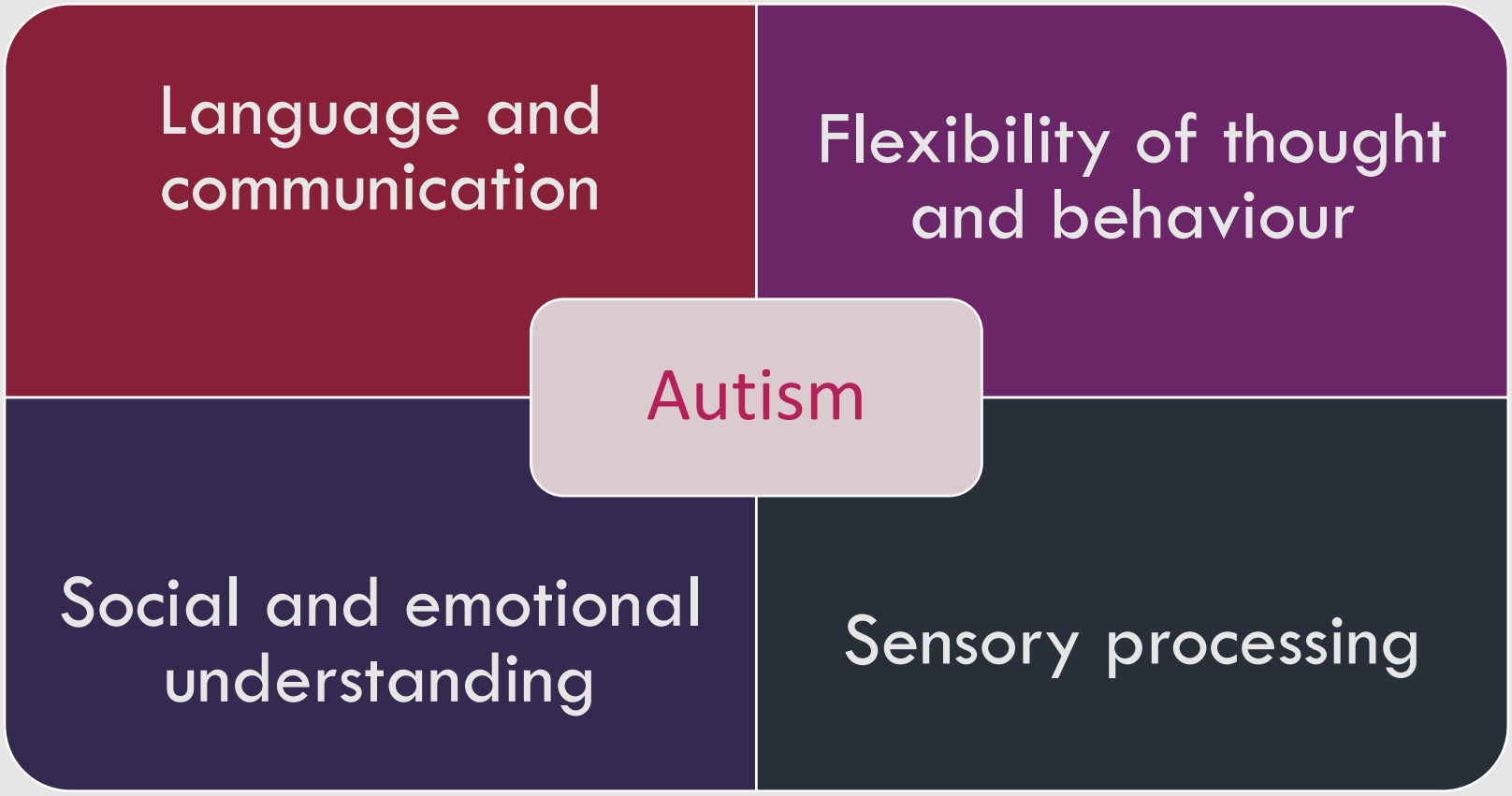
‘When I hear stigmatising language used to describe something that is so integral to my identity, I come to understand my Autism as something that is wrong’.

Terminology Guide – Autism Education Trust. Why words matter.

What do you love about your child?

What does your child find difficult?

Autism - what might we notice?



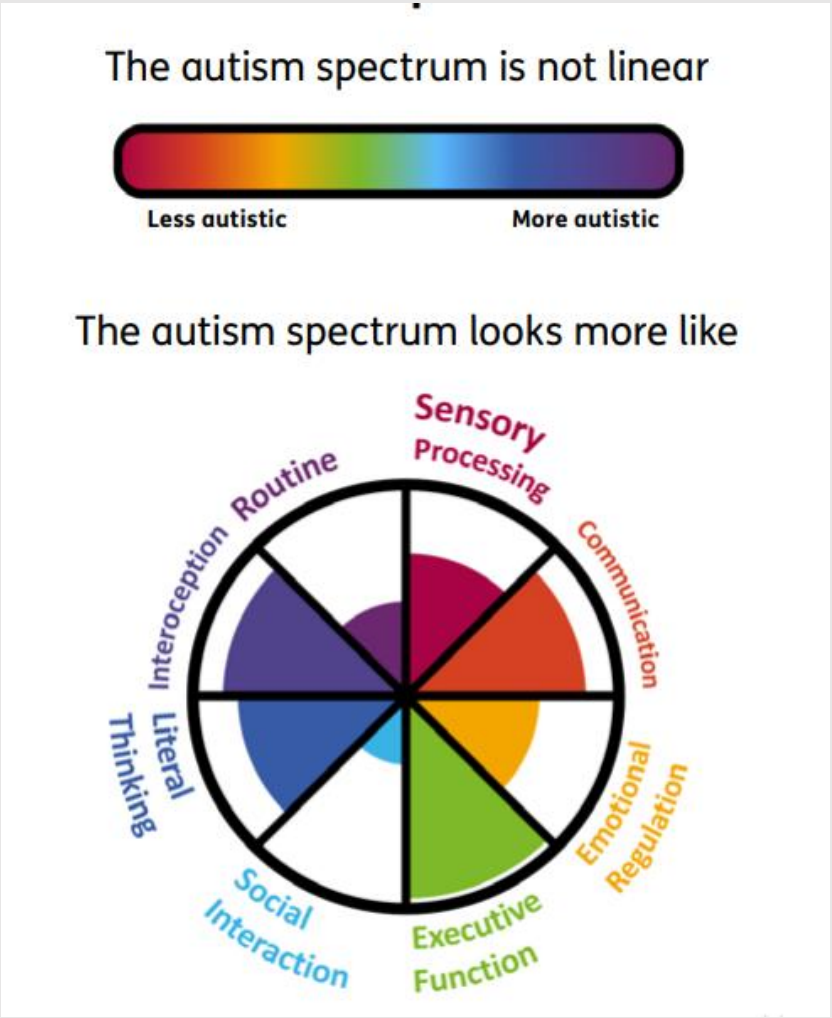
How autism freed me to be myself | Rosie King - YouTube

Spiky profile and fluctuating abilities

The autism spectrum is not linear from low to high but varies in every way that one person might vary from another.

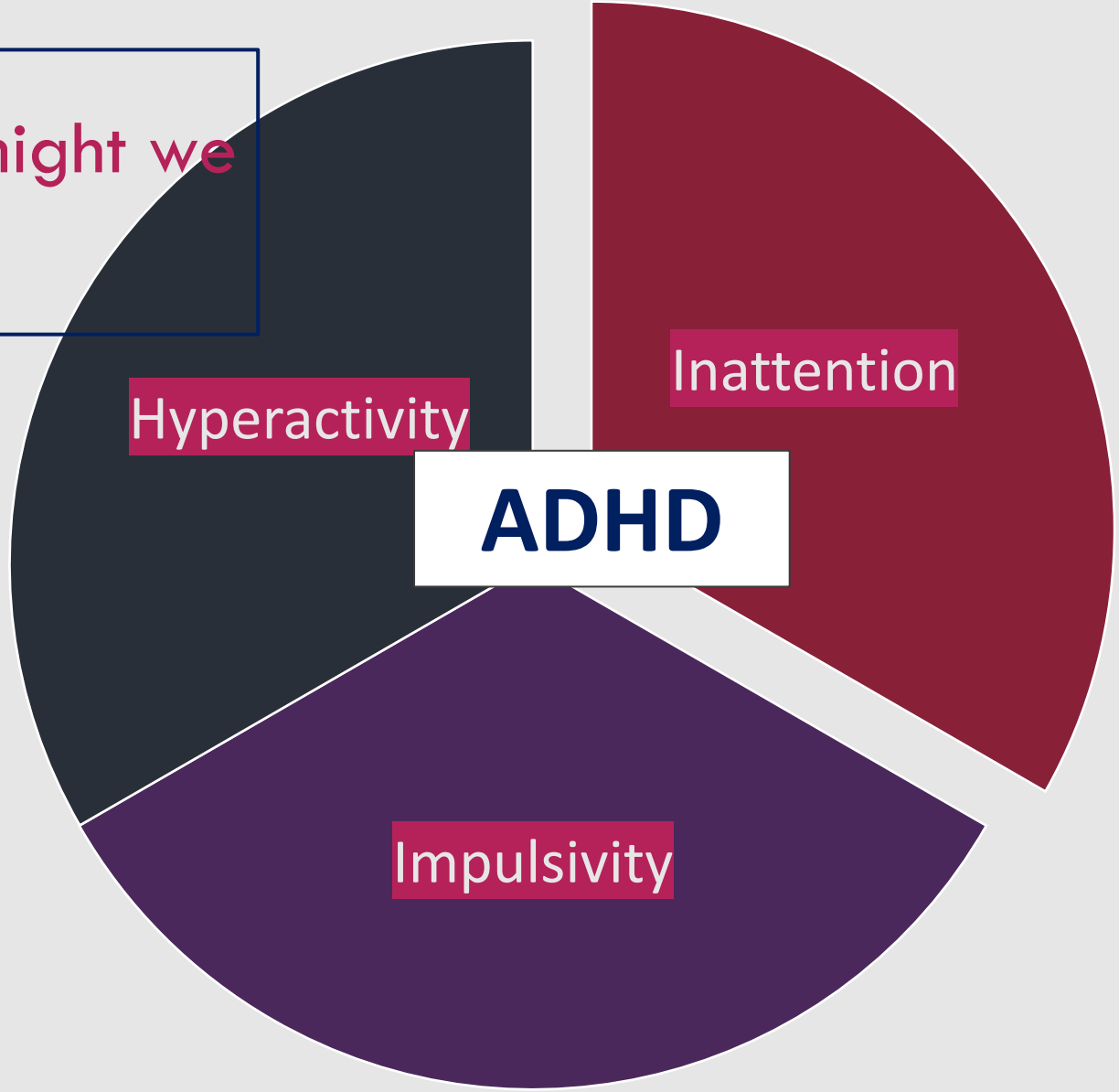
There is no 'typical' autistic person. Every autistic individual has their own strengths, differences and needs, their own life journey, experiences and their own unique story.

Abilities may also vary from one day to the next, traits fluctuate depending on the circumstances. This is the 'spiky profile,' a difference in an autistic person's level of ability from one task to another.



care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

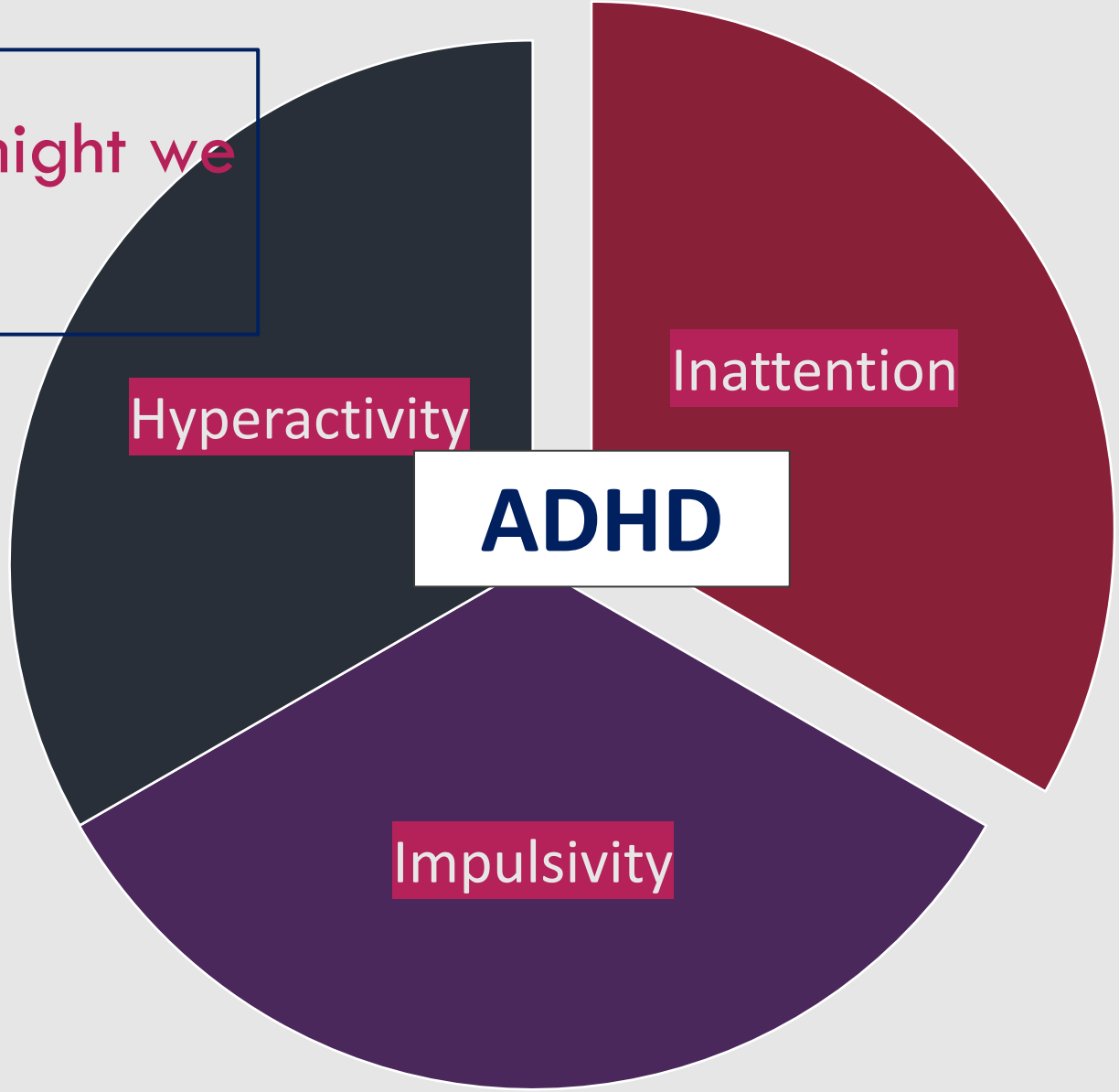
ADHD – what might we notice?



[Short Films About Mental Health - Neurodiversity – YouTube]

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

ADHD – what might we notice?

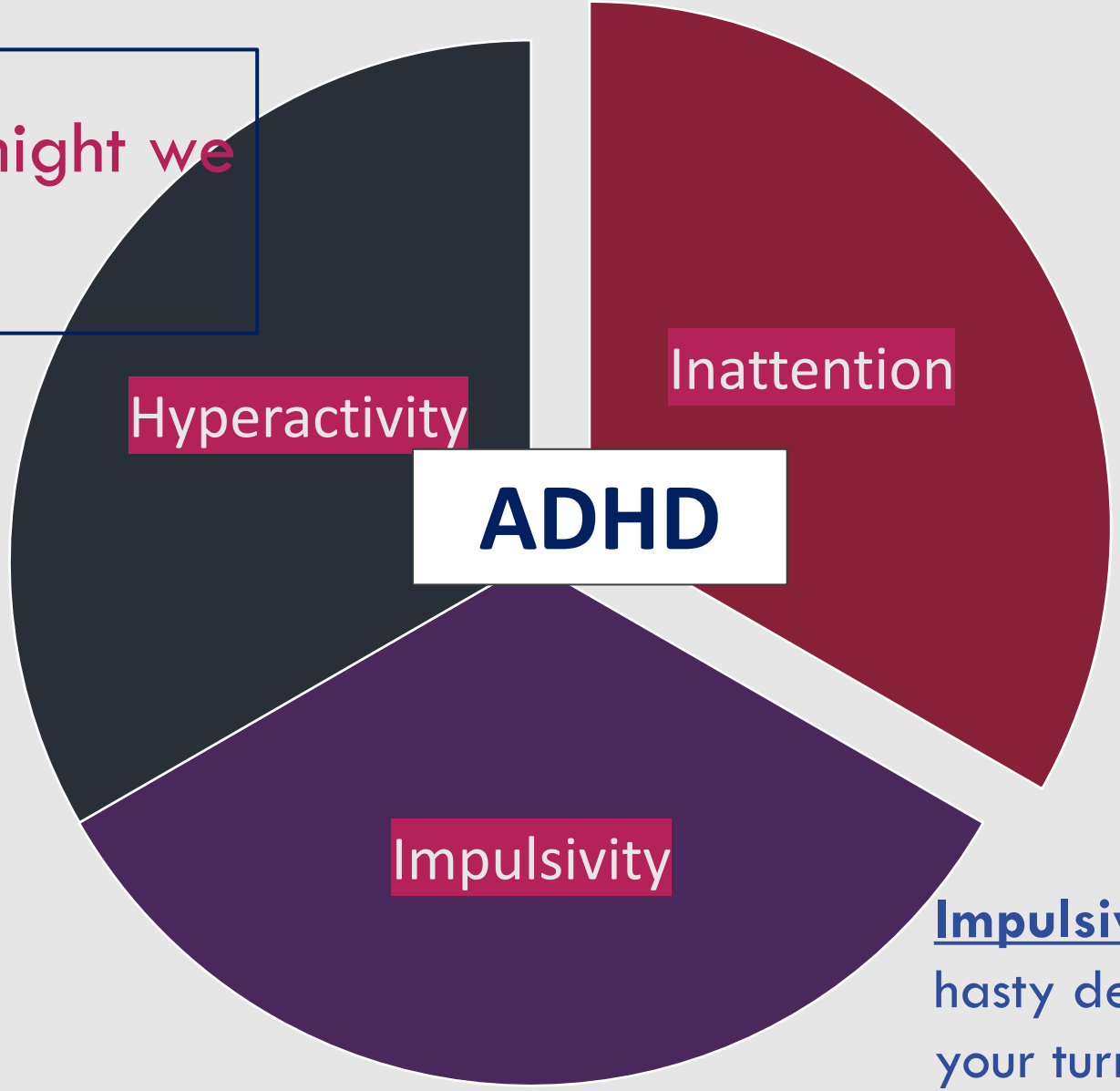


Hyperactivity:
excessive restlessness, constantly running, jumping or climbing. Fidgeting, difficulty staying seated. Excessive talking. Inner restlessness, feeling agitated and unable to relax, internal hyperactivity.

hcrg Care Group

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

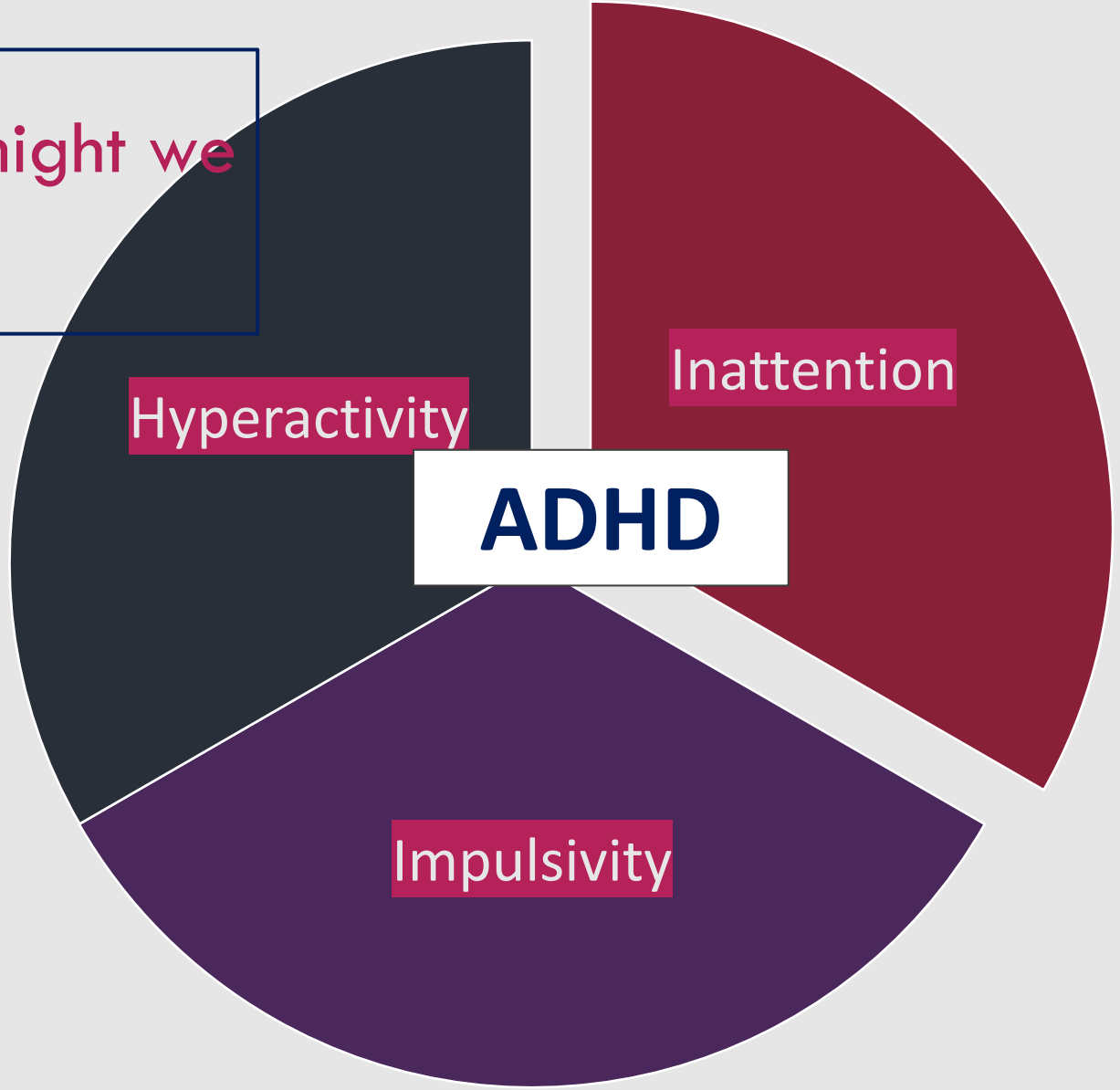
ADHD – what might we notice?



Impulsivity: interrupting, making hasty decisions, struggling to wait your turn, risky/thrill seeking behaviours, intense emotions or outbursts, struggling to regulate emotions.

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

ADHD – what might we notice?



Inattention: difficulty sustaining focus, easily distracted, struggling to follow instructions and complete tasks. Difficulty with organisation, forgetful, daydreaming.

Myth busting ……..

hcrg Care Group

Here are some statements you might hear about neurodiverse people……

Some autistic people have truly exceptional interests and abilities and others don't.

Research shows that ADHD causes differences in the brain.

Autistic people might socialise in a different way and find social situations anxiety provoking, but that doesn't mean they don't want to be involved.

Girls can be diagnosed with ADHD but it's likely underdiagnosed in girls.

Children with ADHD can struggle with attention but may be fantastic at concentrating and paying attention to specific things.

Autistic people can be hyper-empathic. Many autistic people work really hard to understand what someone is thinking and feeling.

Learning Disability

Intellectual functioning	Daily life skills
Low functioning across a wide range of cognitive areas such as: • Memory. • Problem solving. • Learning. • Language.	Significant difficulties with daily life skills (adaptive functioning) compared to expected norms for the age Affects areas such as: • Independence • Friendship. • Eating and drinking • Getting dressed. • Hygiene. • Safety.

Diagnosis comes from formal cognitive tests completed by a psychologist.

Meet the Mencap Myth Busters - YouTube

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

Down's Syndrome

- A genetic condition where young people are born with an additional chromosome
- This leads to developmental differences

Common Needs in Down's Syndrome

- Learning disability
- Speech, Language and Communication
- Vision and Hearing
- Often co-occurs with other neurodiverse conditions

www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

Down Syndrome UK

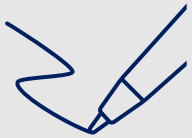
care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

Click on the links to find more information

Specific learning differences

Literacy Differences including Dyslexia

Dyscalculia



Dysgraphia

Developmental Coordination Disorder

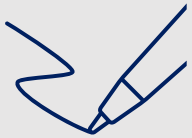
Specific learning differences refers to a range of specific significant differences with learning and processing different types of information, compared to what we would expect of a child the same age.

Click on the links to find more information

Specific learning differences

Literacy Differences including Dyslexia

Dyscalculia



Dysgraphia

Developmental Coordination Disorder

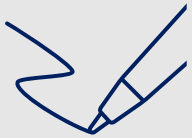
Dyslexia is a common learning difficulty that mainly causes problems with reading, writing and spelling, but can also affect other skills such as organisation. Unlike a learning disability, intelligence isn't affected.

Click on the links to find more information

Specific learning differences

Literacy Differences including Dyslexia

Dyscalculia



Dysgraphia

Developmental Coordination Disorder

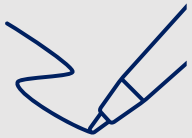
Dyscalculia is a learning difficulty that affects the ability to use and acquire mathematical skills. This might affect how they see numbers; others may find reading symbols difficult, or might find using finance and numbers in everyday life a challenge.

Click on the links to find more information

Specific learning differences

Literacy Differences including Dyslexia

Dyscalculia



Dysgraphia

Developmental Coordination Disorder

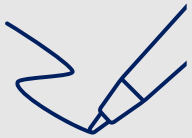
Dysgraphia affects the ability to produce written language. It may present as difficulties with spelling or trouble putting thoughts on paper, with people often finding it challenging to convert the sounds of language into written form. Words might be omitted or ordered incorrectly.

Click on the links to find more information

Specific learning differences

Literacy Differences including Dyslexia

Dyscalculia



Dysgraphia

Developmental Coordination Disorder

(DCD), also known as dyspraxia, is a condition affecting physical co-ordination. Early developmental milestones of crawling, walking, self-feeding and dressing may be delayed in young children with DCD. Drawing, writing and performance in sports are also usually behind what is expected for their age.

Developmental language disorder

Persistent difficulties in the acquisition, understanding, production or use of language

Significant limitations in communication, with **functional impact** on daily life at home, school.

Possible Co-occurring challenges

- High co-occurrence between neurodivergent conditions – two or more things presenting at the same time.
- Impact of other factors on children's lives.

Attachment difficulties

Illness or accidents

Stressful life events

Puberty

Dysgraphia

School stress e.g. exams

Dyscalculia

ADHD

Dyslexia

Transitions e.g. school, moving home

Down's Syndrome

Tourette's

DLD

Sleep problems

DCD

Anxiety

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Family difficulties

Learning disability

Cost of living impact

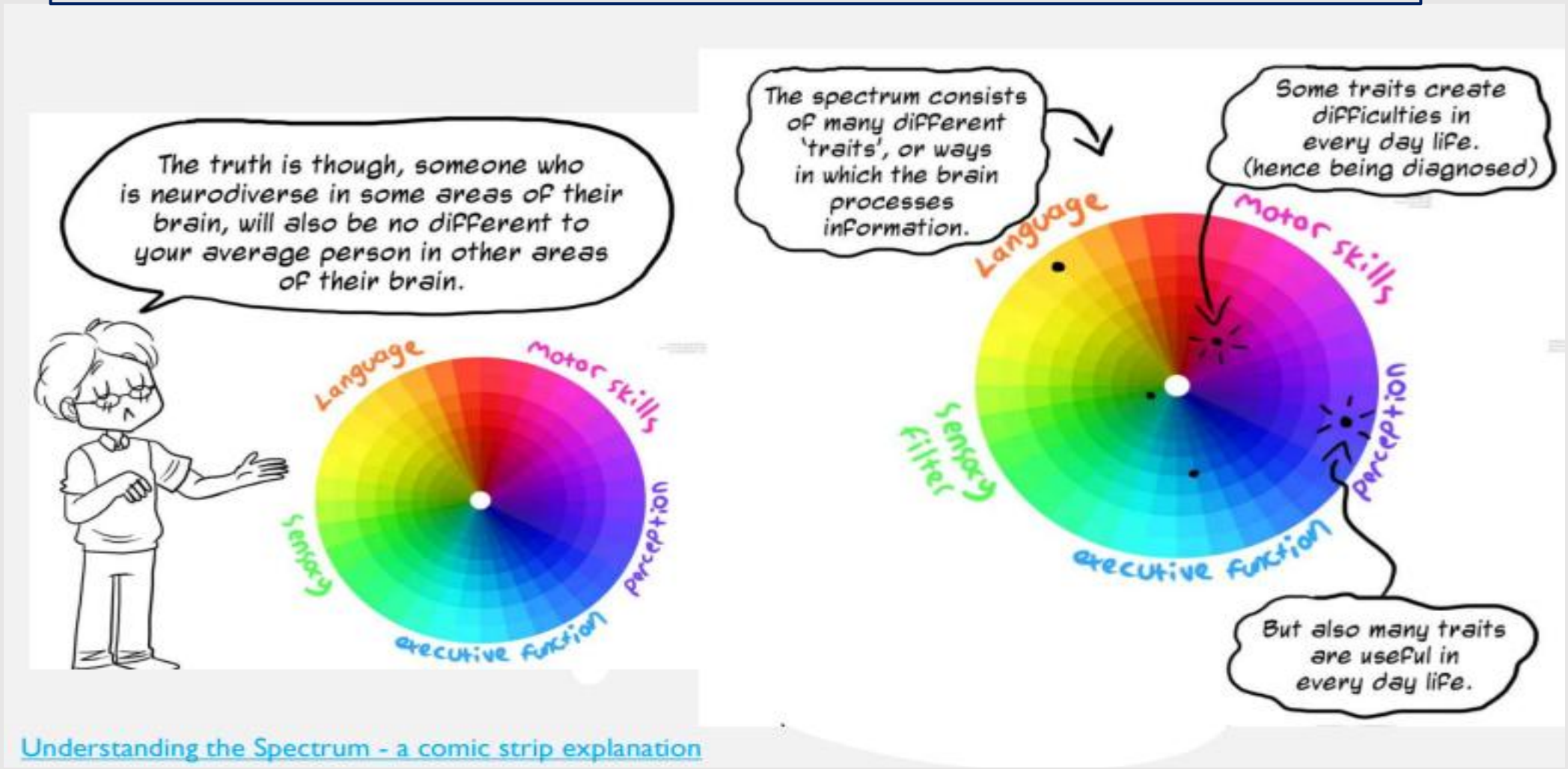
Autism

Bullying

Low mood

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

Neurodivergent profile



Understanding the Spectrum - a comic strip explanation

Neurodivergent Strengths

- Creative
- Spontaneous
- Friendly
- Energetic
- Loving
- Courageous
- Loyal
- Strong moral code
- Attention to detail
- Deep focus
- In-depth knowledge
- Resilience

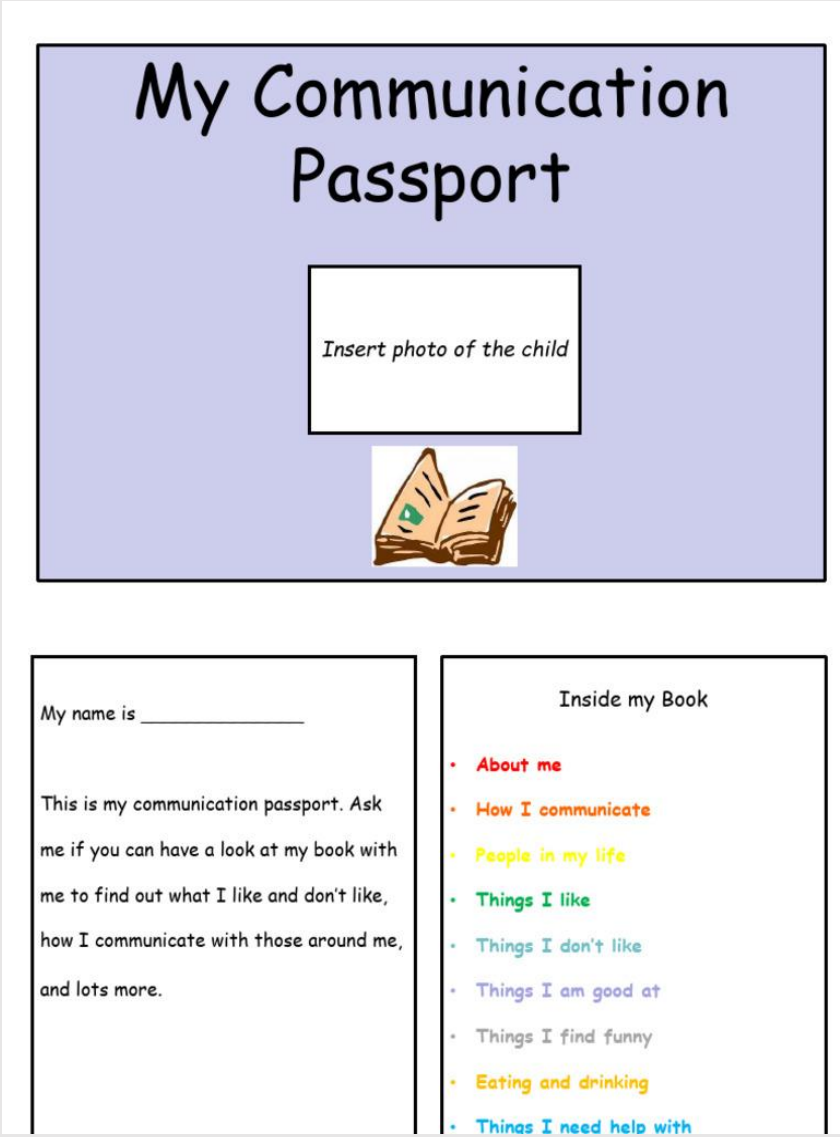
Adaptations that your child may require.

- Access to support should be needs led not diagnostic.
- A consistent approach between home and school is invaluable.

Accommodations/reasonable adjustments could include:

- visual aids.
- adapted seating.
- sensory considerations.
- intervention groups.
- movement breaks
- support for communication
- quiet spaces to help regulate emotions
- lesson differentiation etc.

The importance of a consistent approach



https://www.teacherspayteachers.com

care.think.do.
WE CHANGE LIVES BY TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND CARE.

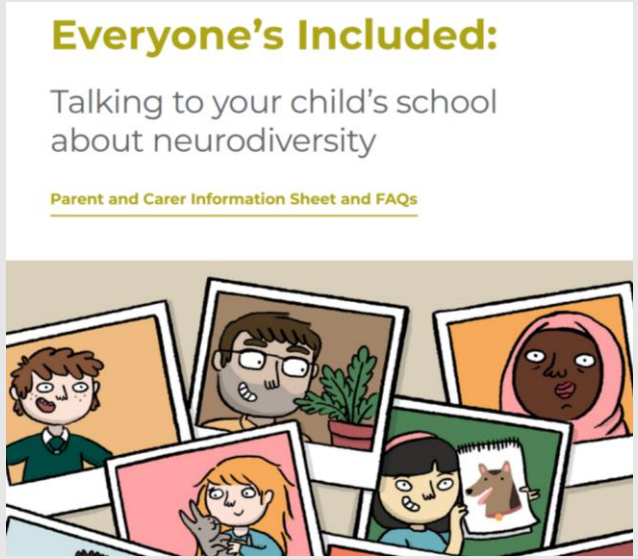
How can we promote a more consistent approach?

- How do you already work together to create a consistent approach between home and school?
- What has been useful?
- What are some of the barriers? How have you overcome them?
- What supports you to communicate with one another?
- What additional tools might you need to do this?

Talking to children about neurodiversity

- The Umbrella Gang Comics
- Newsround video: What is Neurodiversity?
- NAS video on autism Amazing Things Happen
- Comic book on understanding the autism spectrum
- Fun workbook for kids – Detectives Elena and Ruben Learn All About ADHD'
- A Teenager's Guide to ADHD

LEANS_Everyone_is_Included_Talking_to_your_child's_school about_neurodiversity.pdf



What other parents have said.....

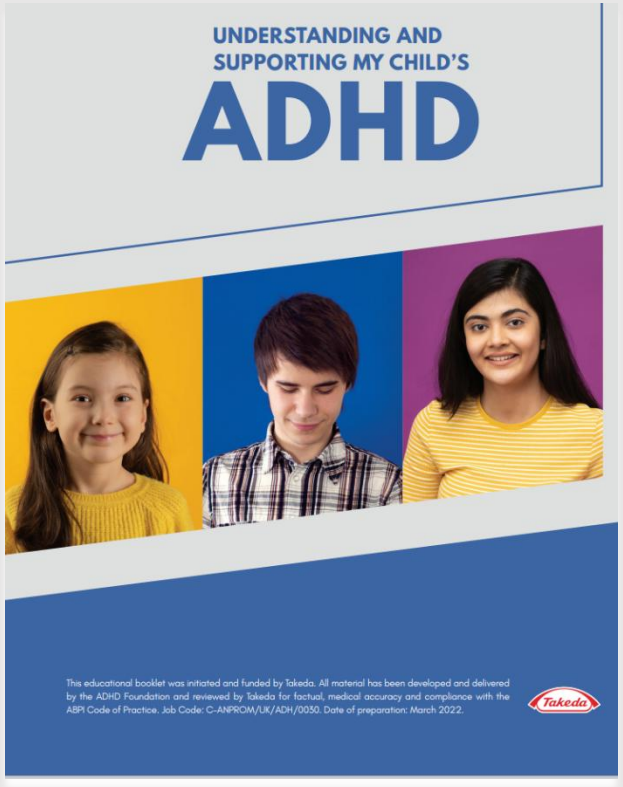
"Keep being curious, become the detective and stay resilient. Be your child's Ambassador, give them a voice. Talk to others and ask for support, remember to take 5 minutes for yourself. Create a WOW board, take a photo of every achievement, don't try and solve everything at once"

Key sources of support and resources in Essex

- Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child Neurodiversity | Essex Family Forum
- Essex Family Forum Home | Essex Family Forum
- Multi Schools Council Home - Multi Schools Council
- Essex Local Offer Roadshows Essex Local Offer Roadshows | Essex Local Offer
- Ordinarily Available Targeted Support Framework What good support in school looks like | Essex Local Offer
- EXTRA Extra Support for Families | Welcome to Extra Support for Families
- MAZE The MAZE Group | SEND Parenting Support Group in Essex
- SNAP SNAP Charity - Registered Charity No.1077787
- Families in Focus Essex Home - Families InFocus Essex
- KIDS Autism Hub Kids Autism Hub – A new support service for Essex, Southend, and Thurrock Aimed at 12–25-year-olds but families of younger children can be referred by their school
- Autism Central East of England delivered by Essex County Council | Autism Central
- Essex Short Breaks What are Essex Short Breaks?
- Essex SEND IASS Essex SEND - Information, Advice and Support Service
- STRM Support STRM Support – Send the Right Message
- PACT Autism Support | PACT For Autism | England

Information and advice

- What is autism?
- Understanding and supporting my child's ADHD
- What is a learning disability? | Mencap
- What are Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs)? - The Dyslexia Association - The Dyslexia Association



USEFUL WEBSITES

- National Autistic Society
- The ADHD Foundation
- Learning Disability Matters
- Contact (for families of disabled children)

Psychology in Schools' Team Free Workshops

From the childhood neurodiversity series…

- What You Need to Know as a Parent/Carer
- Understanding and Supporting Sleep Difficulties
- Understanding and Supporting Eating Difficulties
- Understanding and Managing Behaviour
- How the Brain Develops
- The Impact of Early Life Stress
- Supporting Social Relationships
- Supporting Language and Communication
- Understanding and Supporting Sensory Needs
- The Benefits and Problems with Using Technology

From the mental health series…

- Understanding the adolescent brain - Supporting our teenagers with emotions
- Building Understanding and Supporting Your Child with Tourette's Syndrome/Tics

Upcoming live parent/carer workshops:

www.nsft.uk/workshops

Eventbrite page

Parent workshops | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS

NHS
Norfolk and Suffolk
NHS Foundation Trust

What will you take away from this session?

How would you rate your knowledge of childhood neurodiversity?

Low (1) **High (10)**

References

- **Autism Education Trust. (n.d.).** ***Terminology guide: Why words matter.***
- **Autism Education Trust.** [Available at:] (Accessed: 5 August 2025)
- **Burgess, R. (2016).** *Understanding the spectrum: A comic strip explanation*. The Art of Autism. [Available at:] (Accessed: 5 August
- **Carner, L.** (2020) 'I Thought I Was a Crazy Kid', *ADDitude Magazine*, 14 December. Available at: (Accessed: 5 August 2025)
- **Down's Syndrome Association. (n.d.).** *Down's Syndrome Association*. [Available at:] (Accessed: 5 August 2025)
- **Down Syndrome UK. (n.d.).** *Down Syndrome UK*. [Available at:] (Accessed: 5 August 2025
- **King, R. (2014).** *How autism freed me to be myself* [Video]. TEDMED. [Available at:] (Accessed: 5 August 2025)
- **Mencap. (2020).** *Meet the Mencap Myth Busters* [Video]. YouTube. [Available at:] (Accessed: 5 August 2025)
- **Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. (2018).** *Short Films About Mental Health – Neurodiversity* [Video]. YouTube. [Available at:] (Accessed: 5 August 2025)