



# NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

**In light of autism acceptance week from March 28 until April 3, HR Team will be discussing neurodiversity in the workplace.**

## What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiverse individuals are those with developmental disabilities such as autism, ADHD and social anxiety disorders.

However, there's a growing understanding that these individuals aren't disabled per se, but rather differently abled.

Neurodiversity refers to the different ways we think. Most people are neurotypical. In other words, they process information in a similar way and as society expects.

With neurodivergent people, the brain functions, learns and processes information differently. Most people experience neurodivergence along a 'spectrum' of characteristics, and these traits vary for each individual. Neurodivergence is commonly recognised where people have been diagnosed with neurological conditions such as:

- Autism
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Many people with these disorders have higher-than-average abilities; research shows that some conditions, including autism and dyslexia, can bestow special skills in pattern recognition, memory, or mathematics.

**Neurodiversity is associated with workplace benefits including:**

- Higher levels of innovation
- Creative thinking
- Lateral thinking
- Highly specialised skills
- Analysing strategically

Companies that embrace neurodiversity in the workplace can gain competitive advantages in many areas - productivity, innovation, organisational culture and talent retention. Yet those affected often struggle to fit the profiles sought by prospective employers and sometimes they exhibit challenging eccentricities, and may slip through the net. To realise the benefits, most companies would have to adjust their recruitment, selection, and career development policies to reflect a broader definition of talent.

A report found that 51% of workers on the spectrum have skills higher than what their job requires. Meanwhile, fewer than one in six adults with autism has full-time employment.



## HOW TO BUILD AND SUPPORT NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Neurodiverse people frequently need workplace accommodations, such as headphones to prevent auditory overstimulation, to activate or maximally

leverage their abilities. In many cases the accommodations and challenges are manageable and worth the potential returns. Employers may also find that many of the accommodations

made for the neurodiverse can also benefit their neurotypical employees, such as setting clearer expectations, giving more explicit feedback and providing consistent communication.

### 5 TIPS TO SUPPORT NEURODIVERSITY:



#### 1. Get buy-in from all levels

Engage with leadership so that they, in turn, can have conversations with their teams about what it means to have a neurodiverse workforce.

#### 2. Engage with the local community

Community groups can help employers find and attract neurodiverse talent. These groups may take the form of government agencies, non-profits, vocational rehab centres, educational institutions or offices for disabilities.

#### 3. Adjust your hiring practices

Hiring managers may need to reframe their idea of what makes a 'good candidate'. Many superficial norms, such as a strong handshake or looking someone in the eye, are difficult for neurodiverse individuals to perform.

As well, it's important to remember that resumes don't tell the full story. Because so many neurodiverse individuals have struggled to find work that matches their abilities, they are often self-taught or possess transferrable skills.

#### 4. Be ready and willing to accommodate

Individuals with autism may be sensitive to temperature, sound and lighting. As such, you may need to provide accommodations such as noise-cancelling headphones, privacy rooms, or flexible work schedules, so employees can be their most productive.

#### 5. Amplify the message

A strong neurodiversity program should push its message externally as well as internally, making it a more normal part of employment in general.

# HOW TO MANAGE HUNGOVER OR INTOXICATED EMPLOYEES



**M**any employers deal with possibility that problems with alcohol or even drug consumption can creep into the workplace, with staff under the influence while at work or underperforming because of the after-effects. Employers have a duty of care to all employees so they need to ensure that alcohol in the workplace does not give rise to safety risks. Employees also have a duty of care to themselves. Employers' rights when dealing with this matter:

- Problems with workplace hangovers
- Lower productivity
- Reduced workplace morale
- Customer service is of a lower standard
- Co-ordination, attention span and reaction speed is slowed
- Employee suspension or termination

## How Employers Can Manage Alcohol Issues In The Workplace

HR Team Director, Breda Cullen, said: "It is recommended to have a witness while you hold a meeting to determine the cause for the behaviour.

"The manager should bring them into a confidential setting in the first instance. Ask the employee if they are taking any medication that might impair their judgement.

"Secondly, ask if they have an underlying medical condition.

"Once this has been established and you remain sure the employee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs; you may ask the staff member directly if they have consumed alcohol or drugs in the previous 24 hours.

"If there is a reasonable belief that an employee has come into work still intoxicated, employers will need to suspend the person on full pay, carry out an investigation and consider disciplinary action."

# HRQ&A

## CAN AN EMPLOYEE BE SENT HOME FOR HAVING A HANGOVER?

This depends on the circumstances as every case is different. However, find out important information in a confidential setting to question if they have an underlying medical condition or if the employee is taking medication, in case it is not a hangover.

"If employers have a reasonable belief that the person is suffering from a hangover and they are not able to perform their job adequately or if this impairs either the business or the health and safety of the employee or others in the workplace, then you may suspend the worker on full pay pending a informal investigation.

"Once the facts are established, you may proceed with a disciplinary hearing if you have the grounds to do so," says Ms Cullen.

## ARE YOU LIABLE IF YOUR EMPLOYEE IS DRIVING OVER THE LIMIT?

If your employee is operating in a company vehicle within business hours, the employee is the individual breaking the law. However, employers have a duty to impose disciplinary proceedings. You are not liable for prosecution, but you are by law required to enforce disciplinary action.

## SHOULD YOU HAVE A BREATHALYSER AT WORK?

Employers have a right to breathalyse employees at work given they consent to it. From an employment law point of view, you need to have an intoxicants policy and a drugs and alcohol consent form policy. Particularly in a workplace where employees are operating heavy machinery or driving company vehicles, it would be recommended to have drugs and alcohol testing.



## HR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW WEBINAR

# UPCOMING EMPLOYMENT LAW WEBINAR: EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

### What will you learn from the webinar?

The performance appraisal is an effective tool in ensuring that employees receive structured feedback on their overall performance. However, many organisations do not approach the performance appraisal in the most effective way.

This webinar will give employers a snapshot on the following elements of the performance appraisal:

1. Performance Management –v– Performance Appraisals
2. How to put a robust performance management structure in place (HR Team's B.E.T. system) to get the most out of the appraisal process
3. How to manage staff performance on a day to day basis (feedback and communication) so that the performance appraisal is more of a constructive exercise and an overview of the timeframe concerned
4. How to conduct an effective performance appraisal and what paperwork to use
5. The Dos and Don'ts of the performance appraisal

### How To Prepare For An Effective Performance Management Structure:

## HR TEAM'S B.E.T SYSTEM

### Basic standards for employees

An organisation's basic standards are non-negotiable and must be clearly outlined at the induction stage. These may include matters such as timekeeping, code of conduct, mobile phone policy, social media policy, sickness protocols, grooming and appearance, etc.

### Expectations of employees

Job descriptions outline clear roles and

responsibilities for employees. These must be communicated clearly to ensure that every employee understands what is expected and required of them in the organisation.

### Targets for employees

Managers should review key performance indicators regularly with their teams to keep track of progress, and hold regular team briefings.

A lack of clearly defined goals or key performance indicators can severely hinder your organisation. Targets can include deadlines, financial targets, productivity targets, wastage targets, sales targets, etc. Targets may shift, but it is imperative that employees are fully aware of what they are at all times.

### The Advantages Of A Performance Appraisal

1. Improve Communication
2. Reward Top Performers
3. Support Development
4. Boost Employee Morale and Motivation

### About the facilitator

Operational HR specialist and HR Team co-director, Martina McAuley, has more than 20 years' experience in human resources. Ms McAuley's professionally-led sessions are convenient while working at home, in your office – or anywhere you have an internet connection. These sessions provide practical tips, techniques and strategies that can be applied immediately.

### When is the webinar?

**Date:** Tuesday, March 29, 2022

**Time:** 10.00am – 11.00am

**Cost:** £85/€100

Cost for retained clients: FREE

To register, please [click here](#).

## BREDA CULLEN'S EMPLOYMENT LAW TIPS

### WHY ARE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS A NECESSITY FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

Performance appraisals and formal communication with your employees are extremely important for employee morale and productivity. The main factors include:

- To make sure employees are working to the required standard.
- To gauge which employees are performing the best and therefore eligible for bonuses, pay rises and other rewards.
- To address performance issues where necessary.

### A brief summary of how to deal with contractual documentation

- Issue the written statement of terms and conditions of employment within two months of their start date. Ask the employee to return a signed copy to you as soon as possible and diarise to check that this happened.
- If a probationary period applies, explain how and when the employee's performance will be assessed. Any probationary period should be long enough to allow new staff to settle into the role and show they are meeting the job requirements. Remember that probationary employees have the same rights as permanent employees: there is no special legal status to being a probationary employee.
- A three or six-month probationary period is normal, subject to the role and skills that need to be assessed. Review the employees performance before the end of their probationary period and confirm your decision in writing.
- Keep a record of the employment terms and any variation of them on file.





## UPCOMING HR TEAM WEBINARS IN 2022

**Tuesday, March 29**

**Effective Performance Appraisals**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, April 26**

**Sickness Absence Management**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, May 24**

**How to Conduct a Disciplinary Investigation**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, June 28**

**How to Compliantly Handle a Grievance**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, September 27**

**Effective Recruitment and Selection**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, October 25**

**How to Manage Social Media in the Workplace**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, November 29**

**Using the Probationary Period Effectively and Compliantly**

[Register Now](#)

**Tuesday, December 13**

**Measuring Employee Performance**

[Register Now](#)

### Do you have an employment law question?

Team HR can help business start-ups, SMEs and large multinational organisations. Call to speak to us today on any aspect of employment law or strategic human resource services.

Tel from NI: 028 71 271 882, or from ROI: 01 695 0749.

Alternatively, contact us via email:  
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If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact HR Team.

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