Key Terminology

Let’s talk about it

You might have heard words like 'neurodiversity', 'neurodiverse', and 'neurodivergent'. They all sound similar, but they mean different things. Using the right word is important. It shows respect and helps us be clear. Using the wrong word can be confusing for everyone.

Here’s a simple guide to these terms:

- Neurodiversity (the idea): This is the idea that everyone's brain is different. It is a fact, like how everyone has different fingerprints. It includes all people
- Neurodivergent (the person): This describes one person whose brain works differently from what society thinks is 'typical'
- Neurotypical (the person): This describes one or many people who have brains that work in the way that society considers to be 'typical'. This is a term for people who are not neurodivergent
- Neurodiverse (the group): This describes a group of people with different types of brains (i.e. a mix of neurotypical and neurodivergent people). A team can be 'neurodiverse'. A single person cannot be
- Neurotypes (the categories): This means the different types of brains. For example, 'Autistic' is a neurotype. 'Dyslexic' is a neurotype. 'Neurotypical' (or typical) is also a neurotype

This is why being mindful of our words is essential for showing respect and building an inclusive team. Simple guidelines can make a huge difference, like these:

- Do use 'neurodiversity' when talking about the concept of brain differences (e.g., 'Neurodiversity is a valuable part of our company')
- Do use 'neurodiverse' when describing a group (e.g., 'We are proud to have a neurodiverse team')
- Do use 'neurodivergent' when describing an individual (e.g., 'This is a resource for our neurodivergent colleagues')
- Avoid calling a person 'neurodiverse' (that's for groups)
- Avoid calling a person 'a neurodivergent' (it's an adjective, not a noun). Instead, say 'a neurodivergent person' or 'they are neurodivergent'

Useful links

- Cleveland Clinic - Neurodiversity
- Autism and neurodiversity