



Keynote

**Prof AMANDA KIRBY** MBBS MRCGP PhD

Neurodiversity expert and Founder / CEO of Do-IT Solutions

@profamandakirby

## Harnessing Neurodiverse Talent



@EngProfCouncil

#EANCongress24



# Building more Neuro-inclusive Organisation

PROF AMANDA KIRBY





Inclusive Top 50 UK Employers Judges



### Think Women's 40 Outstanding Global Women 2023 - Professor Amanda Kirby, Do-IT Solutions

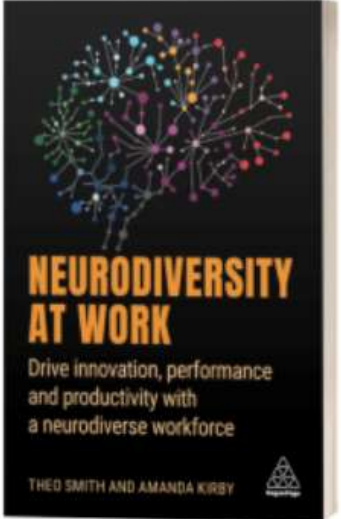
We talked to Professor Kirby author of Neurodiversity at Work: Drive Innovation, Performance and Productivity with a Neurodiverse Workforce, and discovered more about her passion for encouraging more neurodiversity in the workplace, and how organisations can help to make the recruitment process fairer and more equitable to encourage greater inclusivity.



## HR Most Influential 2022 Thinker

### Diversity, Inclusion & Equality Book 2022

Winner



# Increasing neurodiversity in the workplace

City & Guilds Neurodiversity Index Report



<https://cityandguildsfoundation.org/what-we-offer/campaigning/neurodiversity/index/>

# Aims of this session

- What is neurodiversity all about?
- Why is it important in engineering organisations to consider this?
- Q and A

# What is neurodiversity?



Our brains (**neuro-**) naturally vary from person to person (are **diverse**) and are a part of human variation.

**We all think, move, act, process information and communicate differently**



Prosopagnosia

Acalculic

Non verbal

No hearing

Anosmia

Can't  
handwrite

Can't kick  
a ball

Neurotypical

Super recognisers

Actuary

Synaesthetic

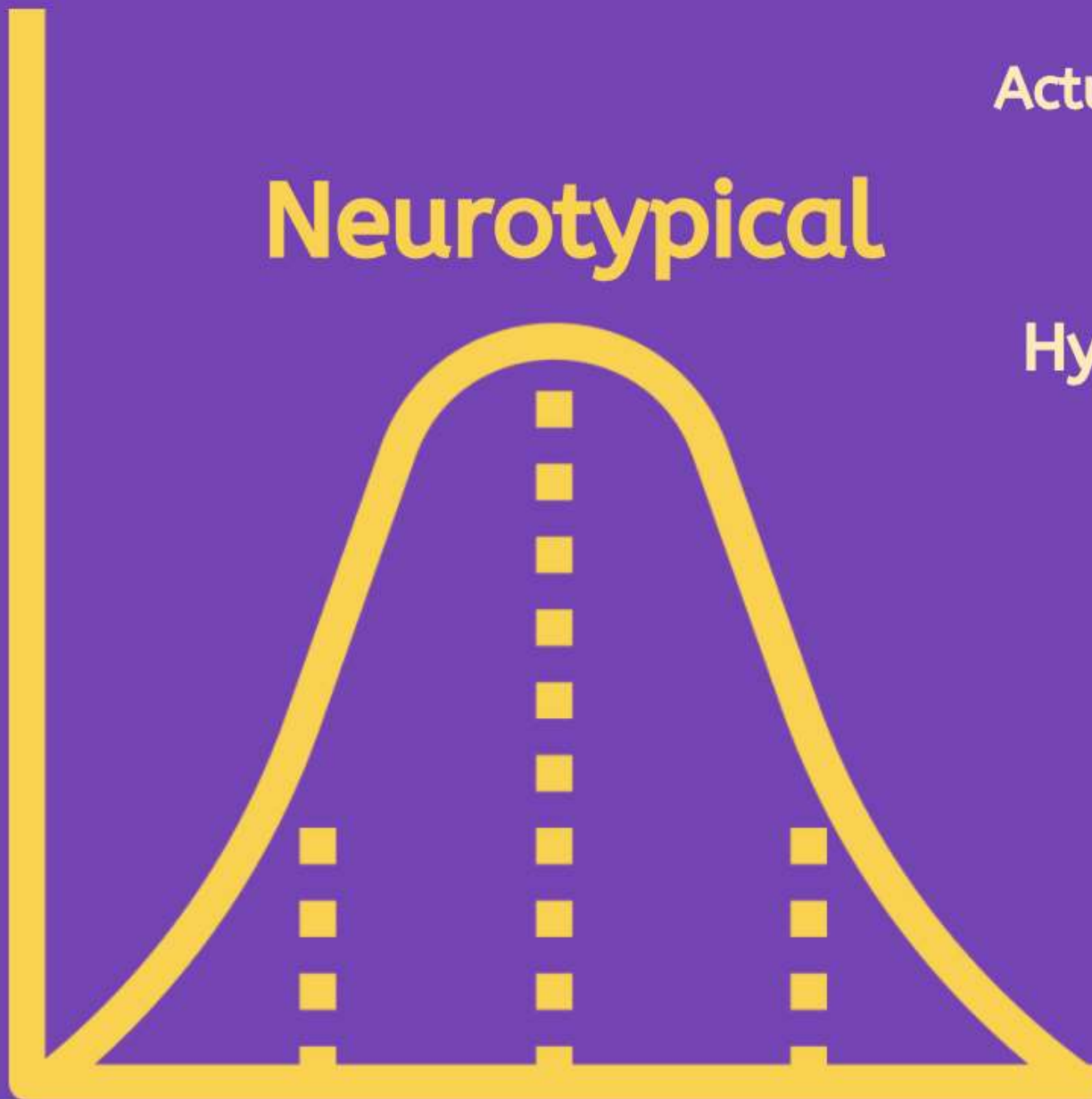
Multilingual

Hyperacusis

Perfumer

Calligrapher

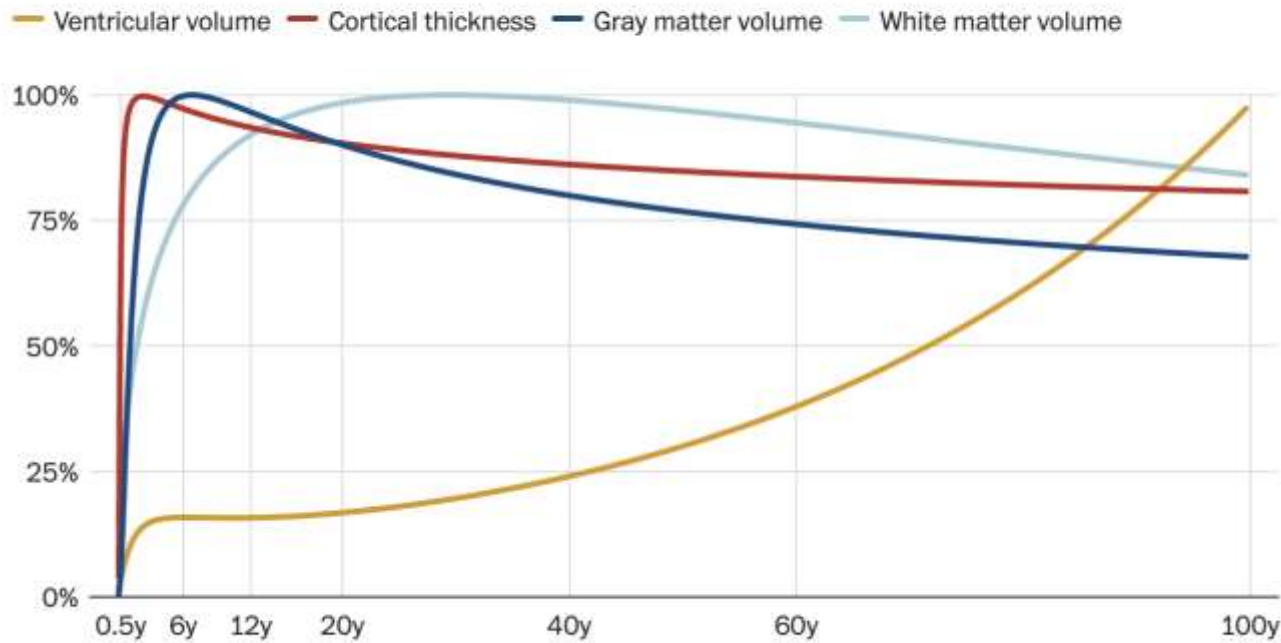
Premier  
footballer





## Structural brain changes over life

Percentage of the maximum volume or thickness of different brain features across years of life



Source: Bethlehem, Seidlitz, White et al.

CAITLIN GILBERT / THE WASHINGTON POST

- **The volume of grey matter** (brain cells) increases rapidly from mid-gestation onwards, peaking just before we are six years old. It then begins to decrease slowly

- **The volume of white matter** (brain connections) also increased rapidly from mid-gestation through early childhood and peaks just before we are 29 years old

- The decline in white matter volume begins to accelerate after 50 years

- **Grey matter volume in the subcortex (which controls bodily functions and basic behaviour) peaks in adolescence at 14 and a half years old**

DLD

DCD

Cerebral Palsy

Dyscalculia

Dyslexia

Tic disorders

ASD

ADHD

Depression

Epilepsy

Anxiety

OCD

MS

Schizophrenia

Huntingtons Chorea

MND

Parkinsons

Dementia



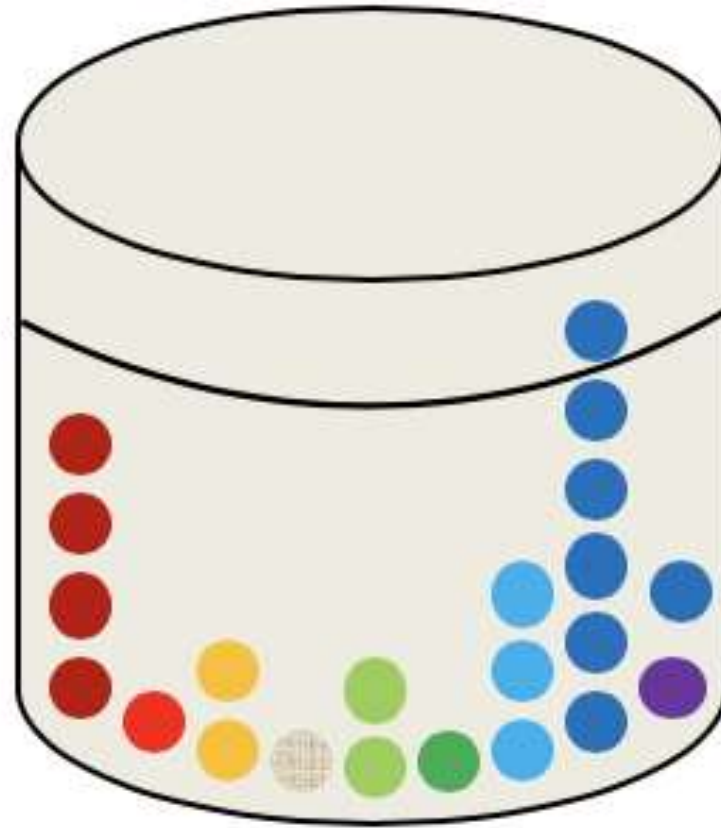


**20%**



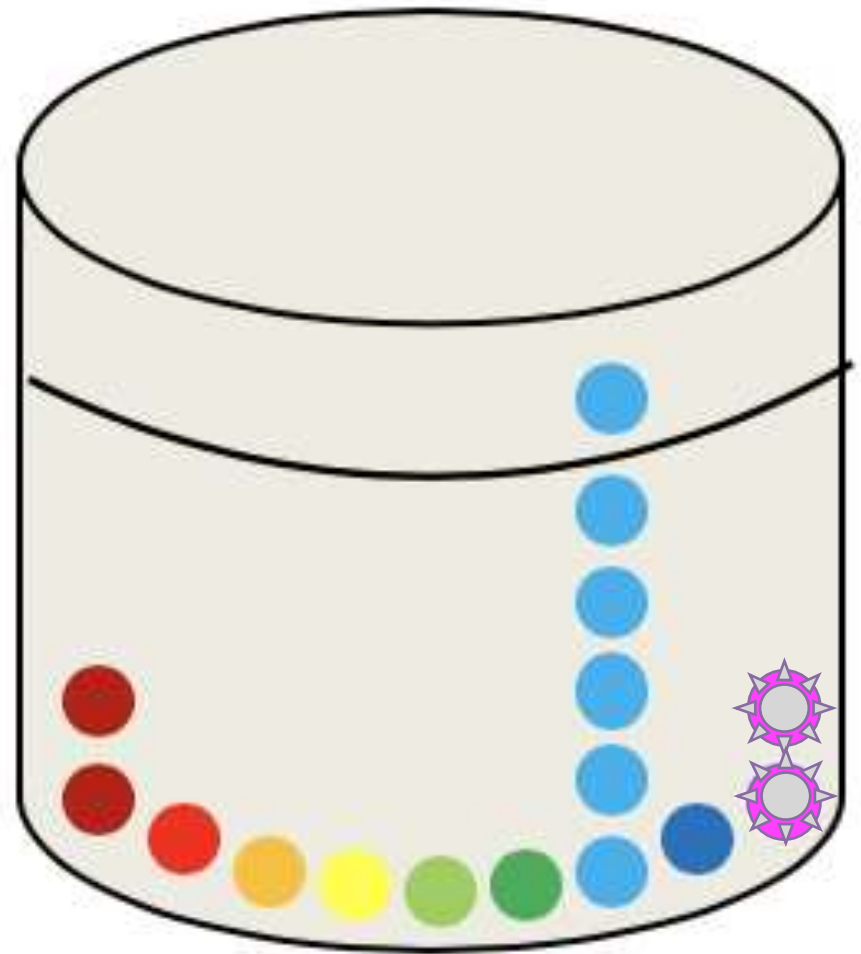
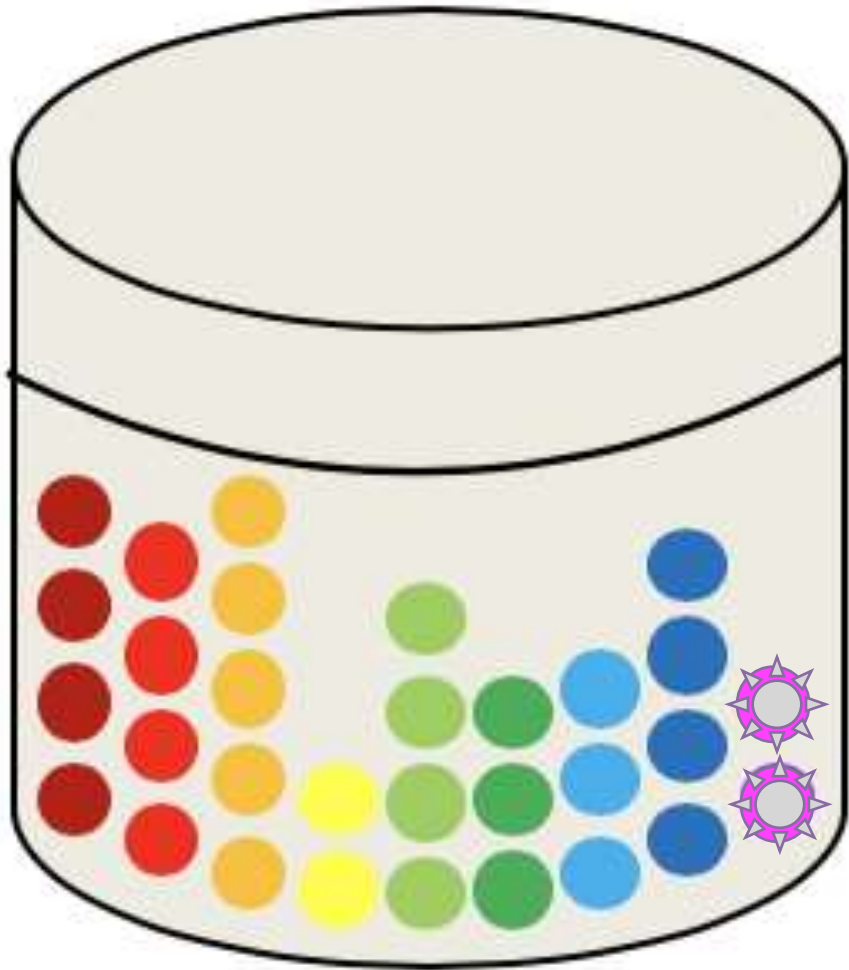
People providing services  
and support  
People receiving services for  
professional  
development

Number of balls indicates the severity of the challenge in that area. Some are easier to see!



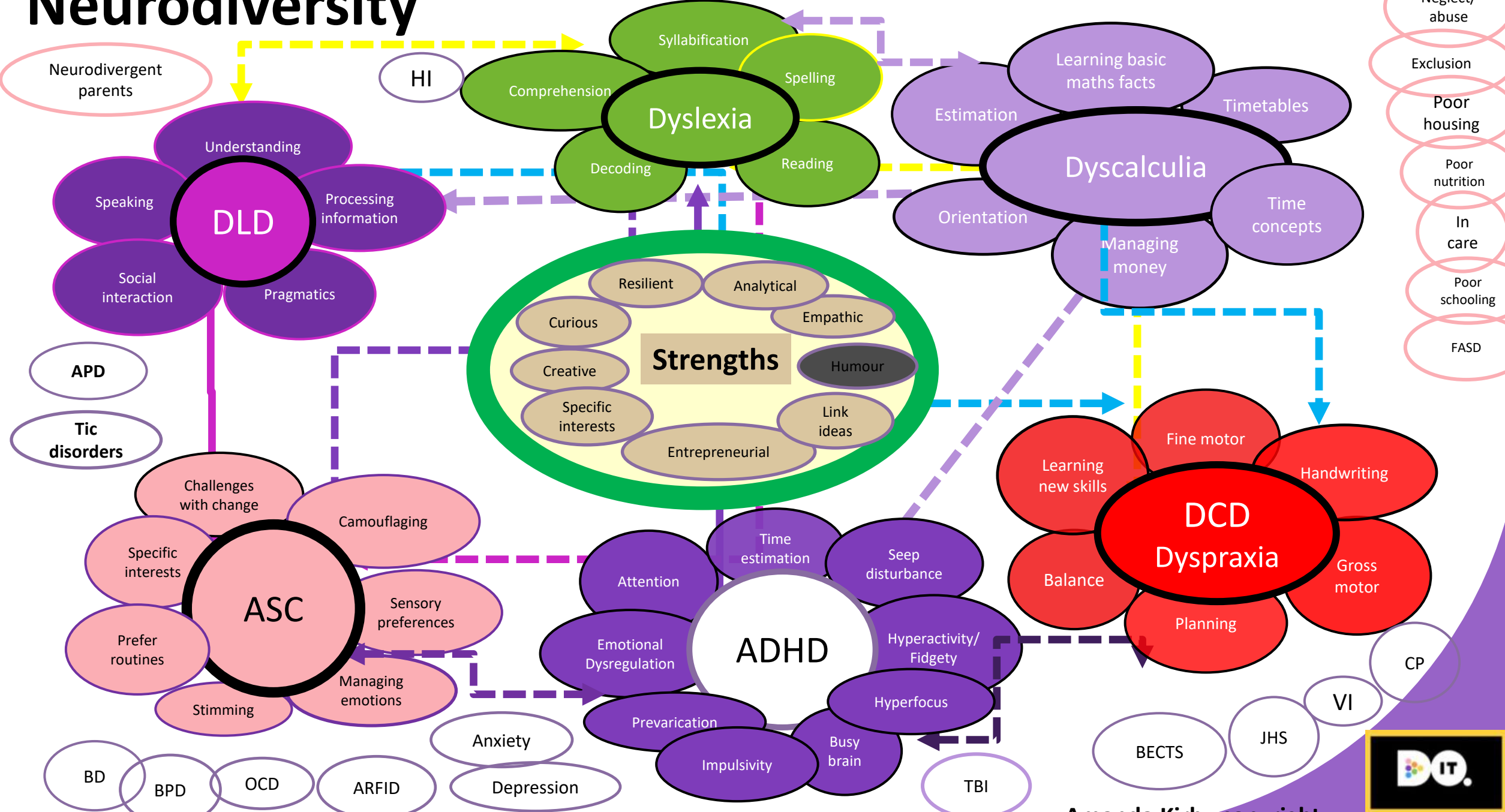
Have to meet a certain level to 'count' and get a diagnosis for challenges or meet the criteria for services

Different colours indicate different types of challenge, e.g. reading, attention, social, motor, home life, behaviours



# Neurodiversity

Other factors



Amanda Kirby copyright

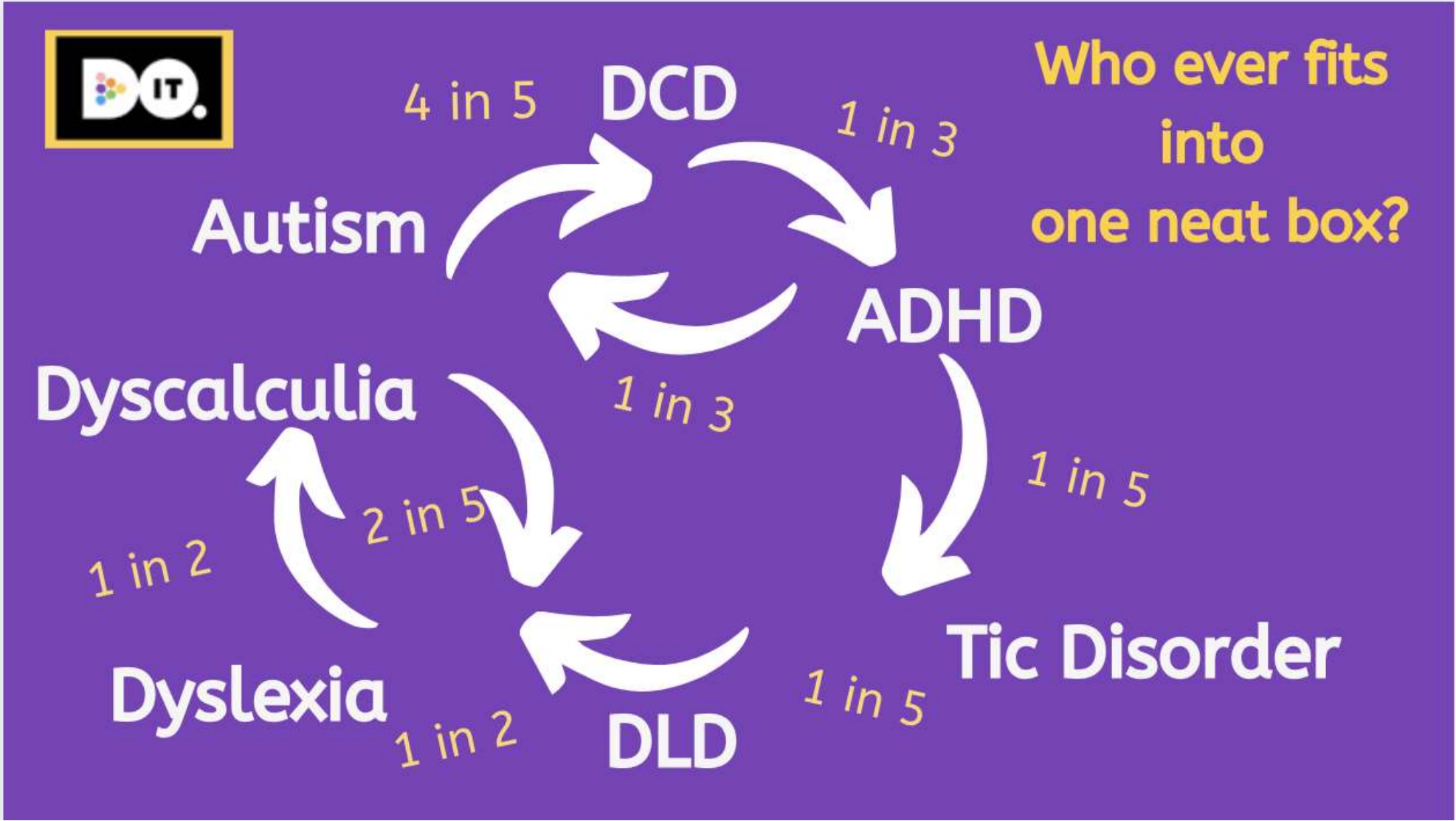


*"Most people take the norms and values within their own professions, organizations, or industries for granted, sharing largely unquestioned assumptions that can thwart communication across boundaries".*

said Amy Edmondson



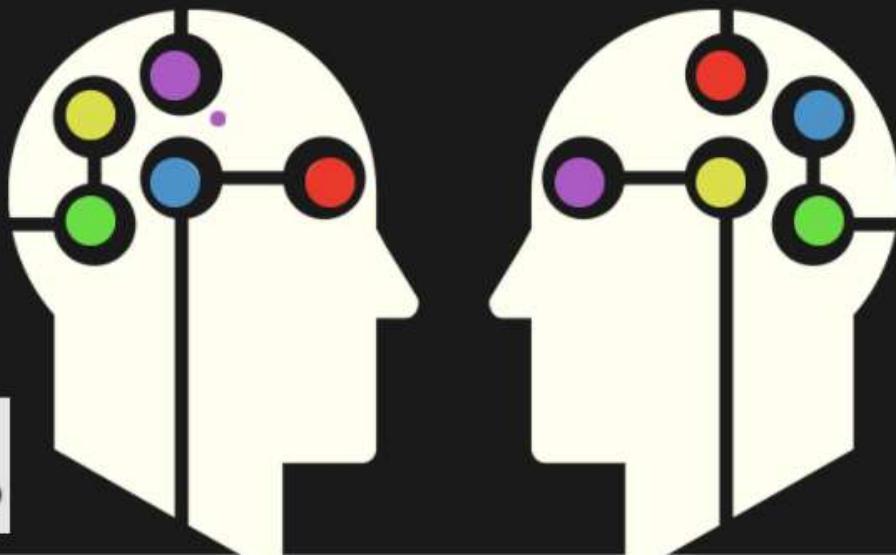
# Overlap is the rule rather than the exception

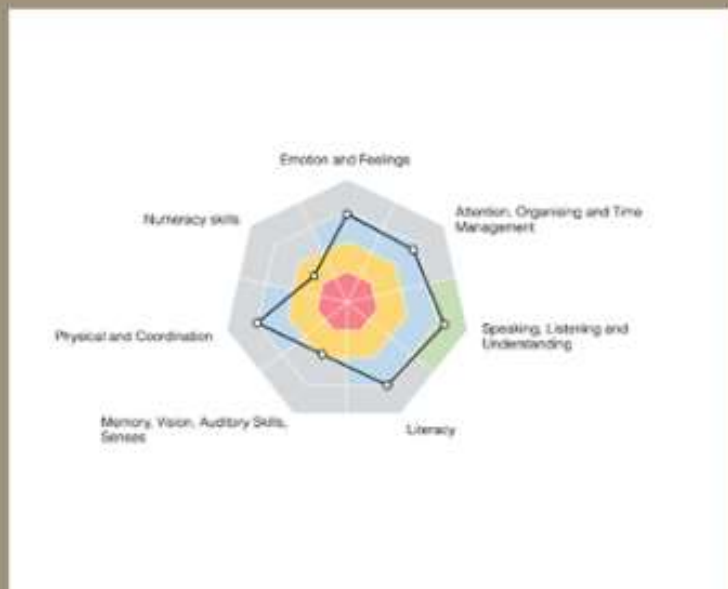
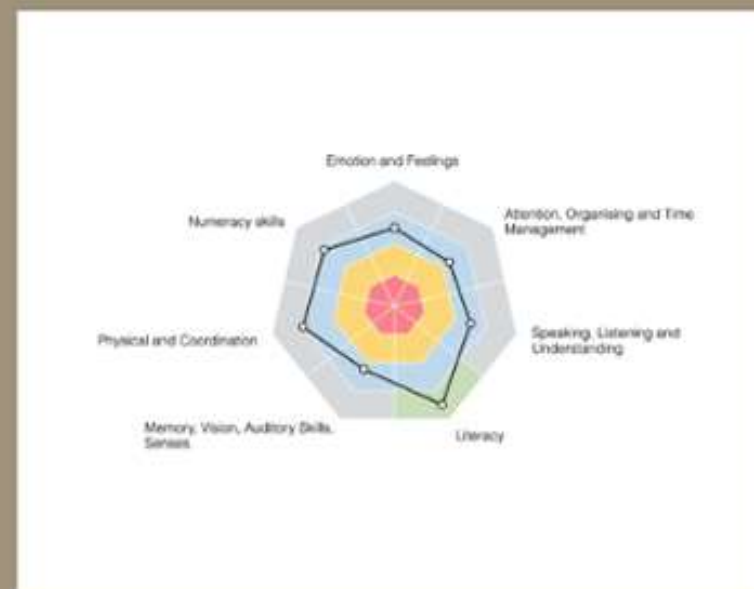


# It's all the same brain

Wellbeing

Neurodiversity





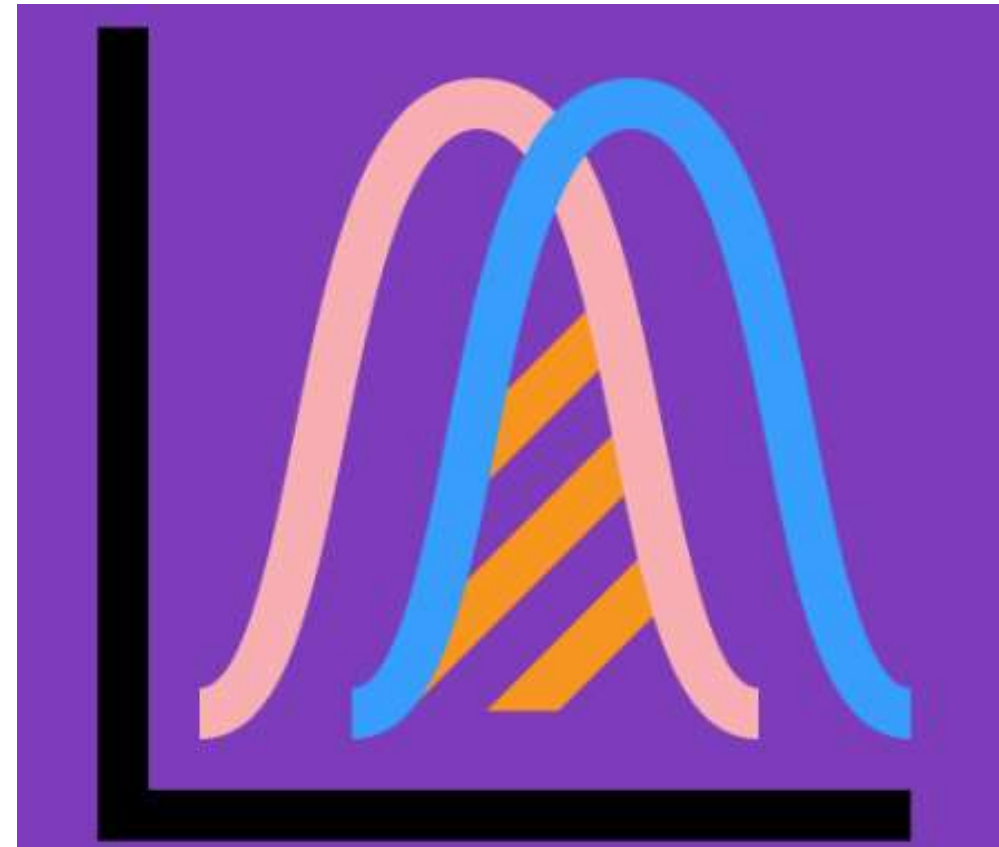
**Two people with the same diagnosis**

**–  
will be very different people**

**Two people one with and one  
without a diagnosis may have similar  
challenges but different life  
opportunities**



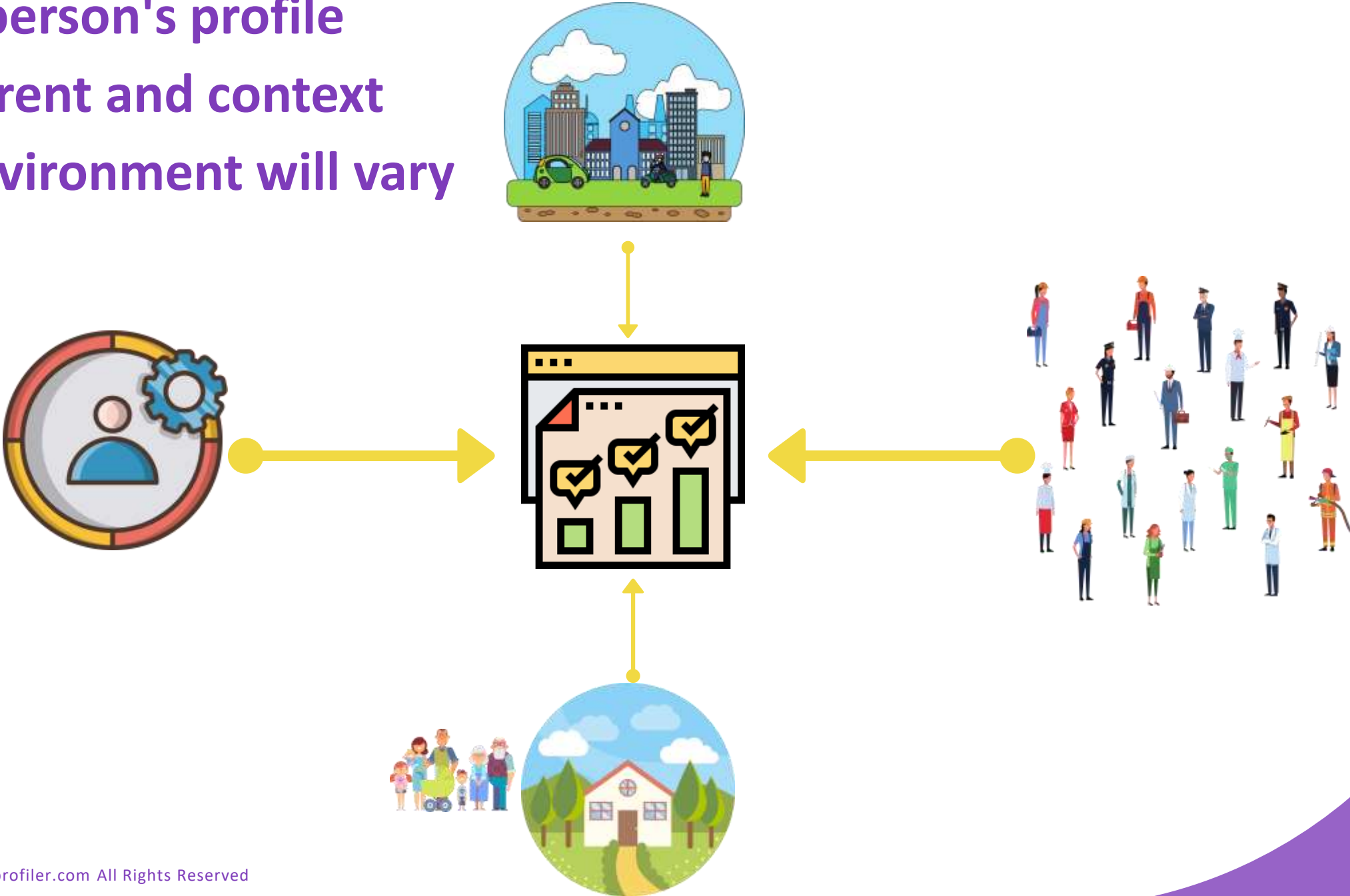
# Who may be missed, missing, misdiagnosed?



The environment we are in can  
make us  
thrive  
...or not survive!



Every person's profile is different and context and environment will vary



Performance = potential – interference

Ref:Gallwey





# Key areas of challenge

- Dealing with complex bureaucratic processes and form-filling, including the professional registration process.
- Difficulties scheduling work, meeting deadlines, and procrastinating, often due to tasks that neurodiversity makes challenging.
- High volumes of reading.
- Communicating thoughts and ideas verbally and/or in writing.
- Dealing with emotions.
- Neurotypical meeting behaviours.
- Being assertive.
- Building relationships at work, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

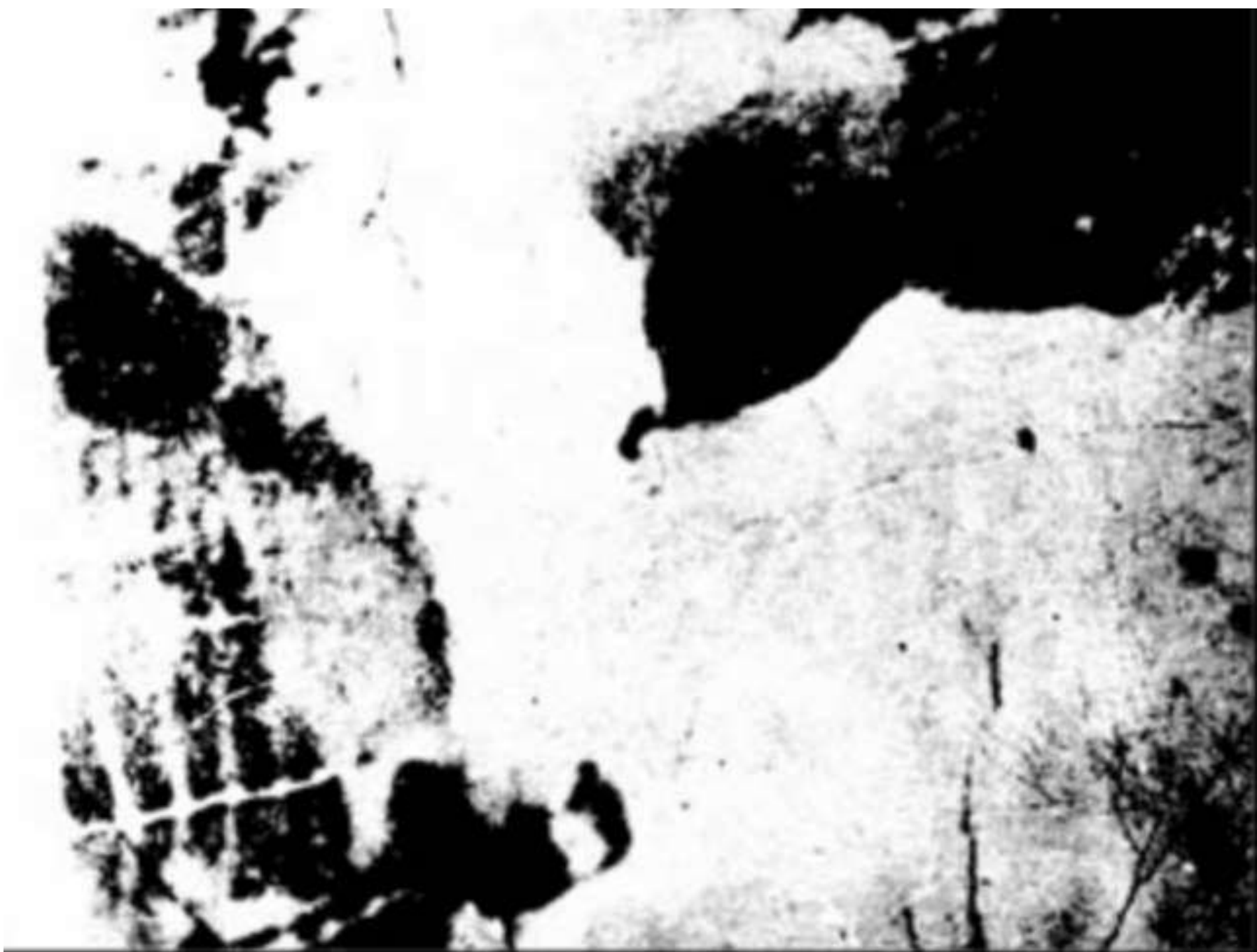
# Flipping the narrative



# Seeing the skills

- **Technical' strengths e.g.** hyper-focus, multitasking, logical thinking, the ability to acquire technical knowledge, visual processing, problem identification and problem-solving, seeing the detail and the big picture, pattern spotting, and the capacity to summarise.
- **Creativity and innovation** - generate ideas and come at problems from a different perspective.
- **Interpersonal skills.** Honesty, empathy, listening skills.
- **Resilience.** Including the capacity to remain calm in a crisis.
- **Teamworking.**
- **Working independently.**
- **Management and leadership skills.**

Consider your **blind spots**?



# What's your Neurodivergent Bias?

Eye contact Bias

Non-verbal Communication Bias

Time pressure Bias

First Impression Bias

Pattern Recognition Bias

Social Norm Bias

Neurotypical Assumption Bias

Small Talk Bias

Assumption of Motivation Bias

Lack of Flexibility Bias



**Language is important  
and personal**

# Microaggressions and comments can lead to ETs'

£168,000 person with autism/autistic described a “**mad as a box of frogs**” (Aylott v University)

“**Dodgy**” (Mehdinejad vs Royal Mail, 2020)

“**High maintenance**” (A v Z, 2019)

derogatory and discriminatory emails relating to him, which evidenced they were dismissive of his disability.  
(Buloss v Shelter)



# Employment Life Cycle



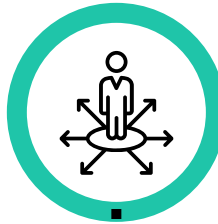
Attraction and Recruitment



Onboarding



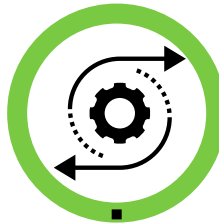
Performance Management



Development



Retention



Change



**Disclosure or not....** Depends if you feel safe; you are masking, or you have developed coping mechanisms

# Why is this important for professional development?

- Inequity
- Lost opportunities for engagement and progression
- Misunderstanding and/or confusion

**A reasonable adjustment** can be thought of as a change made to a process to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability.

However, a disability – diagnosed or otherwise – should not be a prerequisite to requesting or granting an adjustment.

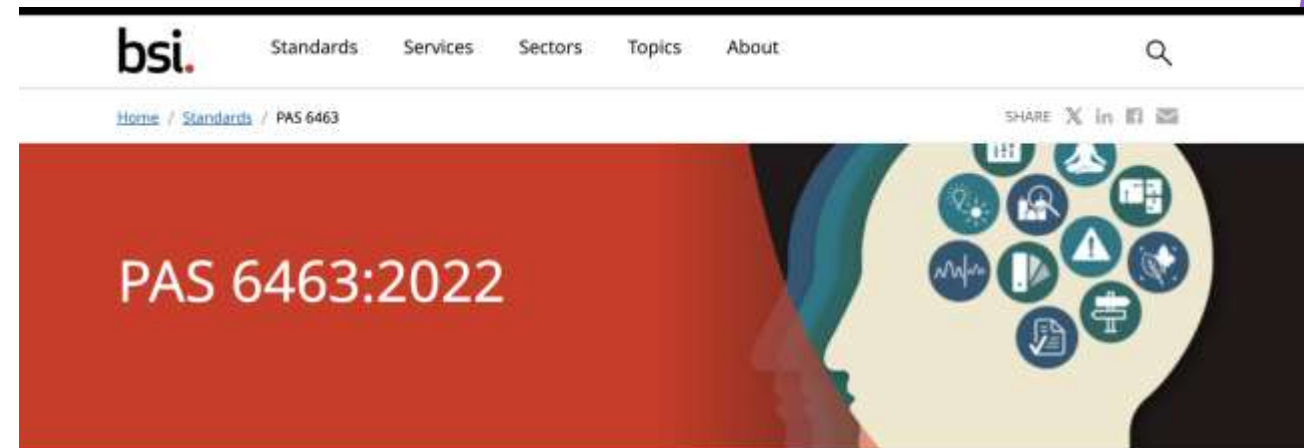
# Reasonable-ness is not providing everything....

When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable a Licensee may consider:

- how effective the change will be in avoiding the disadvantage the applicant would otherwise experience
- its practicality
- the cost
- the Licensee's resources and size
- the availability of financial support

# Anticipatory practices are important...

- Accessible formats for completion of applications/forms
- Additional time to respond to a question; question written down
- Recognising for some in person interviews may be harder
- In person- good 'way marking'



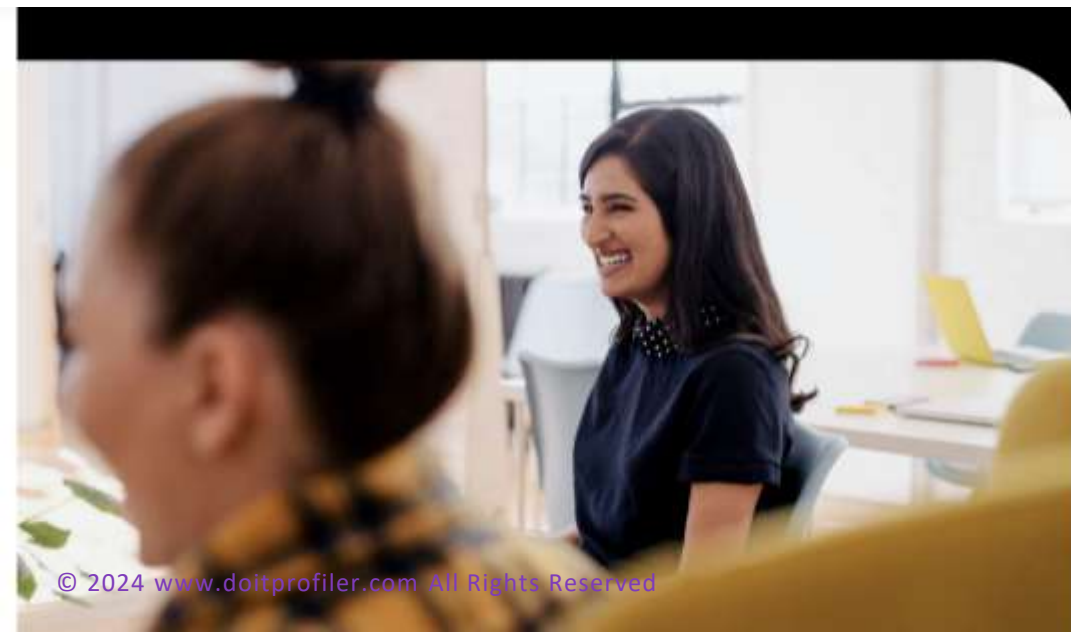
Design for the mind – Neurodiversity and the built environment – Guide





# Neurodiversity champions

## Staff training



What we do / Neurodiversity Champions Programme

## Neurodiversity Champions Programme

# Neurodiversity in Engineering and Technology

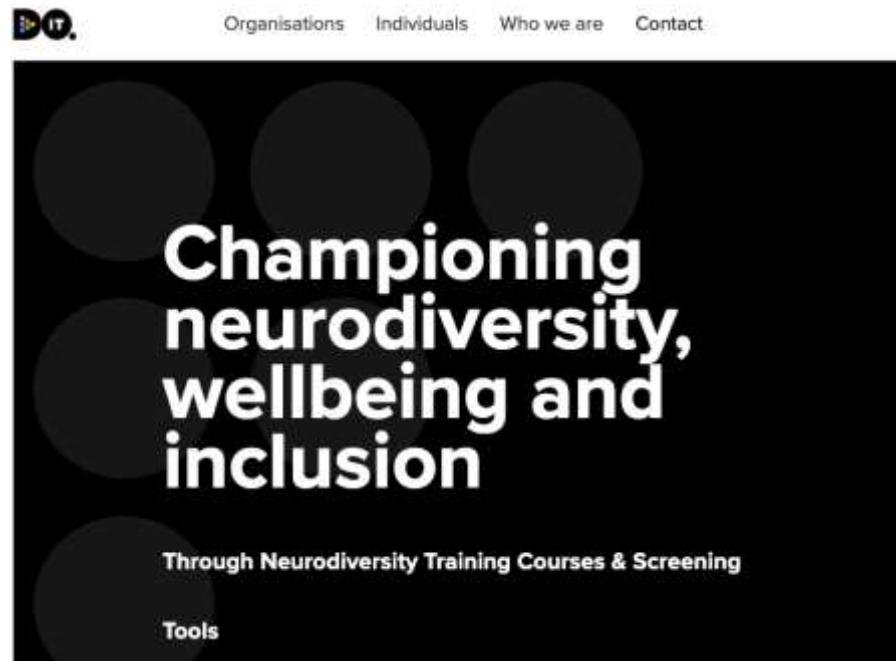
**Participants identified seven key areas where change is needed:**

1. Treating neurodivergent engineers and technicians as individuals
2. Raising awareness and shifting attitudes
3. Training line managers to support neurodivergent team members
4. Integrating neurodiversity into working practices and culture
5. Making it easier to access workplace adjustments
6. Offering targeted career support where it is wanted
7. Enabling neurodivergent engineers and technicians to access and build support.

Ref: November 2023

# More information:

[WWW.DOITPROFILER.COM](http://WWW.DOITPROFILER.COM)



[HTTPS://WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/NEWSLETTERS/NEURODIVERSITY-101-6749245972842446848/](https://www.linkedin.com/newsletters/neurodiversity-101-6749245972842446848/)

