

## **Autism**

Autism is a complex neurodevelopmental condition characterized by a range of symptoms and challenges related to communication, social interaction, and behaviour. Autism is often referred to as a "spectrum" disorder because it manifests differently in each individual, with varying degrees of severity and a wide range of associated strengths and weaknesses.

### **People with Autism may display the following symptoms or behaviours:**

- Finding it hard to understand what others are thinking or feeling.
- Getting very anxious about social situations.
- Finding it hard to make friends or preferring to be on your own.
- Seeming blunt, rude, or not interested in others without meaning to
- finding it hard to say how you feel.
- Taking things very literally – for example, you may not understand sarcasm or phrases like "break a leg."
- Having the same routine every day and getting very anxious if it changes.

### **Supporting Autistic Employees**

The following list outlines possible reasonable adjustments intended for employees on the autism spectrum. It is imperative to acknowledge the inherent variability in each individual's requirements, as reasonable adjustments should be tailored to both the specific needs of the individual and the demands of their respective role. This list is not exhaustive, and it is important to seek advice from the EDI team before implementing reasonable adjustments by emailing

[Reasonable.Adjustments@sthk.nhs.uk](mailto:Reasonable.Adjustments@sthk.nhs.uk)

- Noise-cancelling headphones. These help to block out background noise in a busy office or department.
- A screen filter for a laptop or desktop PC monitor. This helps to make a screen seem less bright, minimising the risk of sensory overload.
- Use of a quiet, secluded part of the workplace. This is useful for avoiding all the noise and movement that can trigger sensory overload if it gets too much.
- Time management and project management apps. These can help with scheduling tasks and finding out what is happening on each day.
- Instant messaging and text-to-speech apps. For those who are non-verbal or are not confident in using the phone or face-to-face conversation, these apps can help to break down communication barriers.
- Ergonomic equipment such as keyboards, mice, trackpads, and other tools like that can help to make an autistic employee feel more comfortable.
- Flexible hours- a working pattern to suit the needs and body clock of an autistic employee.
- Exemption from team meetings and social gatherings. This comes in the form of permission to miss team-building exercises, meetings, brainstorming sessions, and team nights out.
- Exemption from meeting clients- this is down to communication issues some autistic people face, rather than anything else.