

# Empowering Neurodiversity in the Workplace during Covid-19



Creased  
Puddle



# Welcome

---

Welcome to your Neuro-teamC19 business support pack. This has been put together by our rather brilliant team at Creased Puddle to help you to navigate these uncertain times. It's specifically for those seeking practical ideas to assist inclusion for those who are Autistic, ADHD, Dyslexic etc. with the intention of giving you the confidence to start conversations with those different thinkers.

## Please meet #NeuroteamC19

We canvassed the support of those in the UK who are Neurodiversity specialists, like us, to bring you a one stop shop for guidance. Their offerings are in the centre pages. If you can't find what you are looking for get in touch with us as some might have just not met the tight deadline!

Wellbeing is so very important now, and for those 17.1%\* of your staff who are neurodivergent, this could be a very challenging time, let us help you.....



**Caroline Turner**

Founder and Director of Creased Puddle Ltd.

\* 1.1% Autistic - National Autistic Society  
1% Tourette's Syndrome - [www.gosh.nhs.uk](http://www.gosh.nhs.uk)  
10% Dyslexic - [www.Dyslexia.co.uk](http://www.Dyslexia.co.uk)  
5% Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

# This guide is for the employee. It should be supplied with the 'Environments' guide.

---

We understand that the Covid-19 situation at the moment is proving to be very unsettling for everyone. We have put together this guide for you, the employee, to assist you with your challenges as you start to work at home. Some of you might have already set up your workspace, our guidance is built with you in mind. Its really try, trial and error, so make sure that you give a new system, environment or practice a few days before deciding it doesn't work for you.

Please look at the whole of your house or safe areas available to work. And answer the following questions:



Then look at being able to apply the 'environments' guide attached.

### Try, trial and error.

These are our tips for getting the most out of your brain whilst you are working from home. Please work with them and give them a couple of days before you decide they don't work for you / are of no use:

Locate where your best mobile signal is so you don't have to quickly find it if someone rings. Then find out what video conferencing platforms your company is planning to use and watch some YouTube videos on how to access it.

Until this is over, you will need another routine. Some people have found that using a timetable helps with creating structure. Write it out (including breaks) and share it with your line manager. Once you have done this, share it with the team too. Make it visual, put pictures on, bright colours and when you can, change it if it doesn't feel right.

You may work quicker, more slowly or the same at home. Some people love it, but if you feel too distracted try different strategies to help concentration like earphones and working early before people get up.

Try not to send lots of emails for little queries. Your inbox is likely to get very clogged up so try and establish snappy comms for small enquiries like WhatsApp. Keep the amount of information you are digesting to a manageable level.

What comms systems do you prefer? Some people will voice up a text, video conference, email, use snap chat, use shared cloud office platforms or phone. Until new normal working practices are established it might be a mix of all of these. Let your line manager know if you will struggle with any of these.

Build in time with someone who you can let off some steam with. Tech and systems are likely to go wrong and it's important that you know you can go to.

If you don't get a response from a query straight away, log it and move on. Create a document which lists the obstacles you are facing and then try and move onto another task. Again it is likely that your line manager will not be available all the time so having an agreed process will help.

Do things you know will lower your anxiety caused by frustration. This might include things on the 'environments' guide. Create a 'trigger' document, which will allow you to notice what is frustrating you and your line manager to help.

Not every minute of your day may be filled with work to do. This can create a grey area which can cause anxiety. Create a 'go to' activity should work dry up or you hit a technical problem you can't solve.

People won't naturally know what you are doing, where you live and how you are coping. Please tell your line manager these things, if you start to struggle it's their job to help. Speak to a buddy or work colleague who is available if your boss is taken ill or is busy.

If you start to 'run out of work' or don't know what to prioritise, ask for guidance from a buddy online or your line manager. Everyone is experiencing this feeling of a lack of direction but we understand it can be very disorientating.

Write down your jobs on a list, select one, then put the list away. When it's completed, return to your list and choose another.

Also create a 'done' list. So when you've done a piece of work, write it down.

# Environments

---

## Guides to environments for Neurodivergent employees

We know that where you work has a huge part to play in your well-being, ability to concentrate and overall performance. Here are some tips to help you create a more productive environment

- 1 **Clear out.** Choose an area of the house that you can clear of clutter as much as possible. Your brain will be more focused if it doesn't have to filter out information such as piles of washing that need doing or books that need reading. The simpler your view, the more you'll be able to stay on task.
- 2 **Try working with the noise in the background.** Some people find small noises really distracting so providing some white noise can help to disguise infrequent sounds and aid concentration
- 3 **Headphones and earplugs.** A great way to control auditory input, you also need to let people in the house know you can't hear them. How else will you get your elevenses?
- 4 **Open a window.** If you're lucky enough to have access to natural lighting or fresh air, make the most of it. Natural light is so much better for our sleep patterns and energy levels and with a reduced traffic our pollution levels are likely to benefit too!
- 5 **Wear what's comfortable.** You might want to think about what you are wearing if you are video conferencing, but apart from that wear loose, comfortable clothing. Sounds obvious but it's not everyday that we can dress for our senses.
- 6 **Breathe in.** If you like certain smells in burners or atomizers then treat yourself to working with your favourite inhalation. Some pure essential oils are said to aid concentration like Rosemary
- 7 **Move your body.** We know that the quickest way to reset your brain is to move. Joe Wicks is doing a 30 minute session at 9am every week day morning Body coach TV or you can simply Stretch at your desk. Perhaps set up step challenges for those that have step counting watches. Yoga and mindful classes are also great ways of neurologically resetting.
- 8 **Drink your favourite drink, eat your favourite nibbles.** You're at home! Using your favourite mug can be a lovely treat whilst working, schedule in coffee breaks with colleagues for 20 mins twice a day so you can engage with others. Eating the things you love helps your head, don't neglect it.
- 9 **Get outside.** If you can work outside safely, do. We know from biophilic design principles (humans innate attraction to nature and natural processes) that just being in the same place as nature has a huge effect on wellbeing and regulating our neurological system. So smell the roses, feel the grass and taste the rain (is that going a bit too far?)
- 10 **Be patient.** We know that workplace arrangements can take some time before you know how you work at your best. Don't beat yourself up if you, at first, can't structure your day or struggle to concentrate because the kids are running around. Be kind to yourself and try something different. We can adapt our environments to suit our heads, try to have an open mind.

# Case Study 01: Steph Brodie

## Autistic, ADHD and Dyslexic

### How is the current C-19 situation affecting you?

I was unemployed for 17 years before I started working for Creased Puddle. You get used to the isolation in that time. People with ASD live with uncertainty on a daily basis especially in new situations, it's now 10-fold as rules and boundaries keep changing, we can't keep up. It makes me feel more isolated and vulnerable.

Subtle body language can be hard for me to read, so a nod, wave or bright smile lets me know situations are okay.

I needed time to process this new information but it's all changed so quickly. When the rules and boundaries kept changing it gave me more uncertainty and confusion. It made me feel overwhelmed and anxious.

### How much engagement do you need from your line manager?

I'd like them to agree when and how we keep in contact but to know that this could change if I'm struggling with a task or situation.

We still need to feel included. My fear is that whilst I am away from the office there will be changes which I don't know about and this will mean that when I come back, I won't be able to catch up..

### How would you like your line manager to manage you remotely?

Ask me what I want or if I'm happy with any change. Some changes are good, don't underestimate what I can do.

Keep me in the routine of work even if you furlough me. Have a welfare check in when you would

normally have a meeting.

### Top tips:

- Give me facts, solid evidence, black and white ie what does the law say, guidelines, policies etc
- Give me the whole picture as well as the details, sometimes I get stuck on the detail and can't move on until resolved. Getting the wider view can help me to do that
- Give instant or timely specific feedback, build on positive experiences and build trust with your employee
- Allow any employees to put in contingencies they think they need. You might think its overkill, but they are just trying to find some solid ground – give them time to adjust
- If logging on goes wrong or your employee can't access a system this could cause meltdowns. Be understanding and help them to find a solution
- Ensure your employee has a place at home that is quiet and they can set it up as 'the office'
- Help your employee to create a contacts list, check they know the names of everyone and what they do. Keep it up to date
- Don't take it personally if people appear blunt on email, the written word can be misinterpreted.
- Encourage them to take breaks
- Don't be alarmed if your employee wants to get back to basics, build tasks back up one thing at a time
- Back up verbal tasks with an email. Break them up into bite size chunks which help especially with learning new tasks, be direct in written word, don't waffle!



**Steph Brodie**  
Creased Puddle Office Manager

# Meet Neuro-teamC19

We have brought together Neurodiversity Industry professionals to ensure that you have all you need to support yourself, your parents/carers and your employees. Please take a look at their offerings to find the one that fits you best:



Creased Puddle

**Offering:**

- Online assessments for ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia etc in the comfort of your employees home
- Neurodiversity Coaching support for Managers, individuals via zoom
- Covid-19 specific advice for Human resources on retention issues

[hello@creasedpuddle.co.uk](mailto:hello@creasedpuddle.co.uk)



Ambitious  
about Autism

**Offering:**

- Covid 19 -Tips for line managers of autistic employees
- Covid 19 -Tips for managing anxiety
- Covid 19 - Managing flexible working
- Covid 19 - More being developed over time as government advice changes

[EAN@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](mailto:EAN@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)



**Offering:**

- We can offer 2 hour mental wellbeing support sessions online via Zoom

[www.justsaytrainingworcester.co.uk](http://www.justsaytrainingworcester.co.uk)



**Offering:**

- Free temporary working from home policy for employers

Nathan Combes – Employment Lawyer  
[www.harringtonlaw.co.uk](http://www.harringtonlaw.co.uk)



**Offering:**

- Covid-19 Survival guide for individuals

[www.tudorroseservices.co.uk](http://www.tudorroseservices.co.uk)



MARK CHARLESWORTH  
NEURO DIVERSITY EXPERT

**Offering:**

- Free 30 minute listening ear from someone who understands

[www.markcharlesworth.org/covid19](http://www.markcharlesworth.org/covid19)

# Do-IT> Profiler

## Offering:

Free webinars on:

- Managing anxiety at this time
- Working from home in a neuro-inclusive way

[www.doitprofiler.com](http://www.doitprofiler.com)



## Offering:

- Free 'venting sessions' for those who are having difficulties coping
- Free ½ hour coaching assessments
- Free articles, blogs and C-19 tips
- Tools to track your mood

Rachel Morgan-Trimmer  
[www.sparkleclass.com](http://www.sparkleclass.com)



## Offering:

- 1-1 Neuro-Diversity Strategy Coaching for adults who are struggling with lockdown
- Small group Neuro-Diversity Strategy Coaching for teams or families struggling with lockdown

[www.trainingattention.co.uk](http://www.trainingattention.co.uk)



## Offering:

- Home based workplace assessments for the
- Neurodivergent
- Information and advice on comfort and safety at home in C

[colin@cbairdconsultancy.com](mailto:colin@cbairdconsultancy.com)



## Offering:

- Top ten tips how to support Autistic children during Covid-19 lockdown
- Twice a week check in support for Parent and families on Facebook and Instagram

[autism.unravelled@gmail.com](mailto:autism.unravelled@gmail.com)



## Offering:

- Free/low cost coaching for Neurodivergent Key workers
- Free/low cost coaching for the Neurodivergent on low/no incomes

Morwenna Stewart  
[www.morwennastewart.com](http://www.morwennastewart.com)

# Managing Neurodiverse Super teams

---

There is a wealth of information out there on managing remote teams, but what about neurodivergent teams members?

Firstly don't throw out the 'Managing teams remotely rule book.' Every person is different and lots of strategies that work for your typical employee will also work for those different thinkers that are Autistic, ADHD or Dyslexic.

Some of you are trying to manage, some are simply trying to retain, the most ambitious of you are trying to develop and progress your team members. Each person will react differently but as a general rule change can be disorientating and reduce performance at the start.....

**The talents of the neurodivergent thinkers during a time of change and crisis.**



## Challenges may surface

Whilst the neurodivergent talents may shine, once the difference of this new way of working sets in the challenges may surface. Some of your team might find losing the stimulation of a noisy office a challenge, whilst others may miss the structure of the office day.

Neuroscience tells us when faced with danger our brains can fall into the primitive reptilian brain and move into fight, flight or freeze. You may notice:

### Fight:

Louder in voice, faster in speech, argumentative or controlling, blaming others or judgemental.

### Flight:

Avoiding or cancelling meetings/ interactions; avoiding situations, almost becoming invisible, daydreaming missing threads in conversations.

### Freeze:

Stopping mid-sentence, forgetting what they were about to say, memory blocks creating small inconsistent errors, inability to commence tasks.



# However, overcoming challenges has a way of becoming a talent in times of change

“At first I was like OMG I’m going to get fired and I felt really weirded out. Now, 2 weeks in, I love being able to manage my social interaction via tech, its so logical and everyone knows where they stand. Putting timings on meetings and discussions makes it less draining and means I don’t have to make small talk, no more hearing about peoples’ holidays – yeah!”

## Managing your neurodivergent team

What makes a leader’s role different in managing the neurodivergent super team? Firstly be practical, be respectful and above all be available – yet not too available that you create a team of victims, helpless for the future. Empower them to work through this.

After a period of time, when we start to feel safer, we move from our reptilian brain into the evolutionary learning brain, the creative neocortex which is able to make connections, absorb data, process information and move on.

Being in that state for thinking means that our reptilian brain will settle down. We can help those employees into that brain.

[www.thescienceofpsychotherapy.com/the-triune-brain](http://www.thescienceofpsychotherapy.com/the-triune-brain)



## Manage their concerns

At these times it can be challenging to focus on work when your mind wonders to the concerns of the world. Take a tip from Covey and his circles of influence and concern. Let them explore their concerns and one by one notice practically the small steps they can take to control some of these.

### What we can and can't control



## And finally Listen

**LISTEN.** Then ask again and **LISTEN.** Listen out for the overwhelm, listen out for the getting stuck and listen for the stress, listen out for the reptilian brain taking over. Listen for that shift back into the neo-cortex, that connecting learning centre of the brain as they problem solve themselves into this new way of working.

We all download when we reach overwhelm, there is no stopping it, it simply flows on and on and on. And some of us simply want someone to catch this download.

Managers manage by using their greatest talent – listening. Listen to that download, that outpouring, and pause, and pause again before you ask one great question.

“When all of this is happening, what would you like to have happen, right now?”

The question brings them back into the here and now. Yet take note, they may not provide a cohesive answer, you may hear more overwhelm and downloading.

Pause, listen and ask once more “And when all of that is happening, what would you like to have happen right now?”

It may appear an unusually constructed question, yet it is one which may help your super team.



‘What would you like to have happen’ is a key question taken from the coaching field of Clean Language [www.cleanlanguage.co.uk](http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk) these tools were created by David Grove, a Psychotherapist working with those in trauma and PTSD.

For further information on coaching your Managers please contact Cheryl Winter at: [Cheryl@creasedpuddle.co.uk](mailto:Cheryl@creasedpuddle.co.uk)

## Case Study 02: Helen Needham

Autistic

### Impact of C-19

#### How are the changes as a result of C-19 impacting you?

It is hard not to be saddened by the global situation, and the fact that so many people are losing their lives and livelihoods. We have been forced into a situation that we were not able to foresee and the resulting changes have been vast and swift.

For me the ability to work at home has been a huge positive. For many years I have had to manage my mental wellbeing and I know that working in the office has a significant impact on my ability to do that. I am now able to control my environment and work and play 'in my happy place'. I'm still able to do my job and be productive but I'm far more happier and relaxed knowing I don't have to battle my way through working in the office all day.

I have proactively removed myself from social media as it's all-consuming. Everyone is talking about C-19, and it's overwhelming.

Another challenge is working when the children are at home, being structured and organised definitely helps.

#### From your perspective, what's your observations on this 'change'?

As a society we have been catapulted into this change because of 4 drivers; fear, the law/ Government, social pressure and necessity. It's been a rapid change, but what has hit me is the speed at which businesses have adapted to it.

More than ever organisations are more 'people focused' whether it's a virtual coffee morning or local businesses pivoting and starting a home delivery service for customers. We're putting so much more effort into people, and putting in time /effort to make sure that the more vulnerable of society are supported.

As a consultant I'm used to working remotely and looking at ways of doing this which means that there hasn't been a big change for me. For others, they've really had to look at how they do their job divorced from the office environment. Those who can't work from home, have found themselves suddenly without work or on furlough with reduced income.

#### What does the future hold?

I think that businesses will have to future proof themselves, to ensure their survival if this happens again. For employees, it gives them a chance to show they can be productive whilst not having to be physically present all the time. We might have to consider more home working environments especially if it increases productivity and reduces mental stress.

#### What are the opportunities?

Some people work best around other people, some don't. Some people work best in the office environment, some don't. Some people work best with specific detailed instructions, some want autonomy. It would be wonderful if we could start to build people management around an employees' neuro-type leading to increased inclusivity, efficiency and wellbeing?



#### Helen Needham

Helen Needham is a Managing Principal for Capco and manages change within organisations

## Helpful links:

---

### Managing ADHD and Covid 19 - coping strategies

Additude Magazine

### [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

Latest Government Guidance

### [DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk)

For queries relating to education

### [www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/resources/tips.aspx](https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/resources/tips.aspx)

National Autistic Society Tips for families with autistic children and autistic adults

### [www.autistica.org.uk/news/impacts-of-covid-19-for-autistic-employees](https://www.autistica.org.uk/news/impacts-of-covid-19-for-autistic-employees)

Autistica's guidance for managing autistic employees

### [www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/coping-with-uncertainty](https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/coping-with-uncertainty)

Autistica's guidance for managing uncertainty in the light of Covid-19



Thank you for reading this guide, we hope you found it useful. If you would like to be part of our newsletter or want to know more about our day to day support for businesses, please get in touch.

[www.creasedpuddle.co.uk](https://www.creasedpuddle.co.uk)

[hello@creasedpuddle.co.uk](mailto:hello@creasedpuddle.co.uk)

**0800 669 6035**