



Bar Council: equality and diversity guide

Supporting neurodivergent barristers, pupils and aspiring barristers

This guide includes:

- An introduction to neurodiversity
- Legal and regulatory requirements (including reasonable adjustments)
- Advice for chambers in supporting neurodivergent barristers, pupils and aspiring barristers (including FAQs on reasonable adjustments)
- Advice for neurodivergent barristers, pupils and aspiring barristers
- Links to useful organisations

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What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is a recognition of diversity in neurology. Differences may be associated with memory, information processing and executive functioning.¹ Neurodiversity may present in learning preferences, responses, social needs, emotional regulation, and communication.² It's estimated that approximately one in 10 working-age adults are neurodivergent.³

Our understanding of neurological variation is broad and evolving, and there will be some people who have some neurodiversity, but don't identify as having any of the 6 common conditions listed below:

1. ADHD
2. Autism
3. Dyscalculia
4. Dysgraphia
5. Dyspraxia
6. Dyslexia

A neurodivergent person may also have one or more of these conditions, and it will impact on how they process and experience the world around them. It's important to recognise that every individual who is neurodivergent will experience their neurodiversity differently.

Neurodivergent barristers may take a different approach to engaging with information and solving problems than their neurotypical counterparts. Such approaches should be recognised for what they are: differences not deficiencies.

Neurodiversity is not related to intelligence or ability.

Many neurodivergent people identify significant benefits from the way they experience the world. Some can process and organise information faster, hyperfocus on the task before them, and/or come up with creative solutions to problems. But it is important to note that everybody is different.

People can also experience some disadvantages associated with their neurodivergence. These can give rise to the need for reasonable adjustments. Below is a summary of some of the most common characteristics associated with different conditions. It is important to note, however, that not every person with a given condition will experience all of the disadvantages identified below.

¹ [Disability inclusion: neurodiversity at the Bar \(recording\)](#)

² Ibid

³ GMB Union, [Neurodiversity in the workplace: Thinking differently at work](#)

1. ADHD

ADHD is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Around 4% of the population has ADHD.⁴

People with ADHD may have the following strengths: hyper-focus, courage, passion and creativity.⁵

The Brain Charity⁶ suggests that people with ADHD may also:

- Be restless
- Have a short attention span and have trouble concentrating
- Be impulsive

Overall, those with ADHD may require different stimulation levels to a neurotypical pupil, barrister or employee.⁷

2. Autism

The National Autistic Society describes autism as a spectrum, and autistic people are very different from one another. Autism may affect how a person communicates and interacts with the world. Autism rates are estimated at 1 in 44 (UK).⁸

Autistic people **may** have the following strengths: concentration, fine detail processing and strong memory skills.⁹

People with autism¹⁰ may also:

- Find socialising difficult or tiring
- Become overwhelmed in loud or crowded places
- Fidget to manage stressful scenarios

Autistic people can also be sensitive to sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

3. Dyscalculia

The British Dyslexia Association defines dyscalculia as ‘a specific and persistent difficulty in understanding numbers which can lead to a diverse range of difficulties

⁴ [Disability inclusion: Neurodiversity at the Bar \(recording\)](#).

⁵ Genius Within, [ADHD](#)

⁶ The Brain Charity, [Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder \(ADHD\)](#)

⁷ GMB Union, [Neurodiversity in the workplace: Thinking differently at work](#), p8

⁸ [Disability inclusion: Neurodiversity at the Bar \(recording\)](#)

⁹ [Genius Within, Autism](#)

¹⁰ National Autistic Society, [What is autism?](#)

with mathematics. This is unrelated to their age, level of education and experience and occurs across all ages and abilities'.¹¹

People with dyscalculia may have the following strengths: innovative thinking and verbal skills.¹²

4. Dysgraphia

The Brain Charity defines dysgraphia as a neurological condition that affects writing abilities, making it difficult for individuals to use a pen and paper to write clearly and coherently. It is linked to difficulties with fine motor skills and language processing.¹³

The symptoms will vary, but common features include:

- Illegible or inconsistent handwriting
- Difficulty spacing letters and words correctly
- Difficulty with spelling and punctuation
- Difficulty organising thoughts on paper
- Hand pain or fatigue when writing

People with dysgraphia may also have the following strengths: creativity, verbal communication and problem solving.¹⁴

5. Dyspraxia

Someone with dyspraxia may have varying co-ordination and movement difficulties, they may seem awkward or clumsy, and this can also present challenges with handwriting and manual tasks.¹⁵

People with dyspraxia may also have the following strengths: verbal skills, empathy and intuition.¹⁶

¹¹ British Dyslexia Association, [Dyscalculia](#)

¹² Genius Within, [The 4 D's: Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia](#)

¹³ The Brain Charity, [Dysgraphia](#)

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ GMB Union, [Neurodiversity in the workplace: Thinking differently at work](#), p9

¹⁶ Genius Within, [The 4 D's: Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia](#)

6. Dyslexia

The British Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as ‘a set of processing difficulties that affect reading and spelling abilities’.¹⁷ Someone with dyslexia may have ‘difficulty processing and remembering information they see and hear’.¹⁸

People with dyslexia may also have the following strengths: visual thinking, creativity and visual mechanic skills.¹⁹

Legal and regulatory obligations – the Equality Act and BSB Handbook

The law

Neurodiversity may meet the legal definition of a disability (Equality Act 2010)²⁰ where statutory guidance states that ‘a disability can arise from a wide range of impairments which can be... developmental, such as autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), dyslexia and dyspraxia’.²¹

The law provides rights and protections for disabled employees (this covers barristers and pupils) including:

- The right not to be discriminated against because of a disability
- The right to reasonable adjustments²²

Note: Some neurodivergence will not meet the criteria for disability under the Equality Act and some people who are neurodivergent will not see themselves as disabled and have the right to identify (or not identify) as they wish.²³

Section 47 of the Equality Act relates to provisions covering barristers and prohibits discrimination with respect to:

- The arrangements chambers use to decide to whom to offer pupillage or tenancy, the terms offered or not offering a pupillage or tenancy
- The terms on which someone is a pupil or tenant

¹⁷ British Dyslexia Association, [About Dyslexia](#)

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Genius Within, [The 4 D’s: Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia](#)

²⁰ Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 refers to physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on someone’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Note: here "substantial" means "more than minor or trivial" and not "big".

²¹ [Equality Act 2010 Guidance](#).

²² ACAS, [Neurodiversity at work: Understanding neurodiversity](#)

²³ GMB Union, [Neurodiversity in the workplace: Thinking differently at work](#), p10

- The way the pupil or tenant is afforded access to opportunities for training or gaining experience or for receiving any other benefit, facility or service
- Terminating the pupillage, pressuring a person to leave chambers or subjecting that person to any other detriment²⁴

It also prohibits a barrister from:

- Harassing a pupil, tenant or anyone who has applied for pupillage or tenancy
- Victimising another person in relation to recruitment to pupillage or tenancy

BSB regulatory requirements

There are also regulatory requirements outlined in the [BSB Handbook](#) as follows:

- **CD8** You must not discriminate unlawfully against any person
- **rC12** You must not discriminate unlawfully against, victimise or harass any other person on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, citizenship, sex, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, **disability**, age, religion or belief, or pregnancy and maternity.
- **rC110** You must take reasonable steps to ensure that in relation to your **chambers** or **BSB entity** (.3) the following requirements are complied with:
 - Reasonable adjustments policy - chambers or a BSB entity has a reasonable adjustments policy aimed at supporting disabled clients, its workforce (members and employees) and others including temporary visitors²⁵

Reasonable adjustments

Equality law specifies a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person and requires that reasonable steps be taken to remove, reduce or prevent any substantial disadvantage a disabled person faces because of their disability.²⁶

The duty is on an employer (and this includes chambers) and a failure to comply with this duty and to make adjustments is discrimination against the disabled person (be they a member of staff or member of chambers).

You should note that an employee (or barrister or pupil) does not need a diagnosis to be considered disabled under the Act²⁷. Whilst an employer (or a chambers) might

²⁴ Equality Act 2010, Section 47

²⁵ Bar Council, [Reasonable adjustments guidance](#)

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ ACAS, [Reasonable adjustments at work: Adjustments for neurodiversity](#)

ask for proof - any member of chambers, employee, or pupil is not legally required to provide it.²⁸

Making reasonable adjustments

It isn't possible to have one hard and fast rule around what may or may not be a reasonable adjustment for neurodiversity and it may be entirely appropriate to refuse to make an adjustment depending on the circumstances. Our [guide to reasonable adjustments](#) outlines the key elements to be considered when making a reasonable adjustment – such as the effectiveness and practicability of the adjustment, as well as resources (including cost) required to provide the adjustment.

We explore application of this approach to neurodiversity in our FAQ section from page 17 onwards.

We've listed some examples of reasonable adjustments suggested by ACAS²⁹

Adjustments made to support someone to **concentrate**:

- Standing desk
- Regular breaks throughout the workday
- Quiet place to work away from any distractions

Adjustments made to support someone with their **written communication**:

- Reading/writing software eg screen reader, voice-to-text technology
- Different coloured background for documents and signs eg coloured paper and overlays
- Extra time to read information and complete tasks
- Easy to read/consistent fonts
- Subtitled recordings
- Information provided in advance

Adjustments made to support someone with their **time management and organisation**:

- Regular check ins on how work is going
- Use of extra reminders and planners that show deadlines and appointments

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

- Giving clear timescale and support with deadlines

Adjustments made to help reduce **sensory overload**:

- Private, quiet spaces to go to
- Changes to dress code eg allowance of softer materials or calmer colours
- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Computer screen filters to reduce brightness
- Fixed seat or preferred workspace
- Sensory aids
- Additional efforts to reduce uncertainty - support with changes or transition
- A personalised evacuation plan

Adjustments made to support someone with **poor balance or co-ordination**:

- Specialist equipment
- Clean, organised spaces
- Signs providing clear direction

Note: This is not a comprehensive list of all possible adjustments, and it is best if you discuss with the individual what adjustments they think would help.

Tip: Be proactive. It's important to focus on what can be done in terms of any reasonable adjustment. If you detect signs of overwhelm in someone who is (or may be) neurodivergent, think about exploring and offering support.

Advice for chambers

Problems can sometimes occur when a person who is neurodivergent is expected to work in an environment that does not accommodate, understand, or appreciate their needs or differences.

Raising awareness of neurodiversity

To make progress on inclusion we need to feel comfortable talking about neurodiversity. CIPD³⁰ suggest awareness raising across an organisation can help to

³⁰ CIPD, [Neuroinclusion at work](#)

build understanding and consideration of others' working styles and preferences.³¹ If everyone is more aware of neurodiversity, people are more likely to ask for support or adjustments as they will be able to approach colleagues, clerks, their supervisor and so on, and others will be less likely to judge them or make inaccurate assumptions.³² It is particularly important that clerks have training, given their key operational and support function.

Ways to raise awareness of neurodiversity:³³

- Cover neurodiversity in induction materials
- Include neurodiversity in chambers' EDI training
- Run awareness days – these can be done in line with national events eg [National Inclusion Week](#) or [Neurodiversity Celebration Week](#)
- Highlight support available (including reasonable adjustments)
- Ensure accessibility needs are considered as common practice

Raising awareness of neurodiversity via training can support general awareness and understanding³⁴ and can make people feel more comfortable talking about neurodiversity.³⁵ It will help put neurodivergent people at ease, whilst allowing for others to approach any questions or concerns without the fear of being wrong.³⁶

Having a neurodiversity policy

Having a neurodiversity policy can help introduce and manage consistent standards of inclusion. Any policy can be a standalone policy or combined with other policies, e.g. your equality, diversity and inclusion policy.³⁷

What a neurodiversity policy could include:³⁸

- A commitment to neurodiversity inclusion
- Acknowledgment of legal responsibilities related to neurodiversity
- Support available, including wellbeing support services/contacts members, pupils and employees can access
- Clarification that a diagnosis is not required to secure support
- An explanation of how you aim to create a neuroinclusive chambers eg training and awareness

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Adapted from ACAS, [Neurodiversity at work: Making your organisation neuroinclusive](#)

³⁴ CIPD, [Neuroinclusion at work](#)

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Bar Council, [Disability inclusion: neurodiversity at the Bar \(recording\)](#)

³⁸ Adapted from ACAS, [Neurodiversity at work: Making your organisation neuroinclusive](#)

- A description of how chambers processes are neuroinclusive eg recruitment
- Links to other relevant policies or procedures
- An explanation of how and when you will review your policy

Tip: If you have neurodivergent members or staff you could ask them for help in creating your neurodiversity policy.³⁹

Tip: If your chambers is part of the **Disability Confident Scheme**, it is good practice to mention neurodiversity when referring to disability.⁴⁰

Supporting and responding to disclosure of neurodiversity

Any individual's neurodivergence is personal to them. Chambers and pupil supervisors need to be sensitive as to how someone feels about their neurodivergence and the issues that relate to it.

Everyone will be different. Someone may be comfortable freely discussing their neurodivergence, others may not. This needs to be respected as their choice. It's very important to see and respect **the person**, not simply focus on their neurodivergence.

If someone has disclosed that they have a neurodivergent condition(s), their supervisor (if they are a pupil), colleagues and chambers staff may need to speak to them about issues relating to this, for example, to check if they need support and if so, what this could be. A fundamental principle is to not assume but instead ask someone what they want and need – and respect their answer. These conversations are likely best carried out privately and sensitively, rather than in public areas.

Be aware: disclosure is difficult; many people don't disclose a neurodivergent condition for fear of it leading to discrimination.⁴¹

Neurodiversity is categorised as an invisible disability, and this means there is no requirement to disclose it – it is protected information⁴² and any chambers/employer only has a duty to make reasonable adjustments if they know or reasonably could be expected to know of their member/pupil/employee's disability.

Whether someone discloses their condition or not and at what stage of recruitment or professional life is a personal choice. If they do decide to share their condition, it's up to them to decide how and when they do this.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ AchieveAbility, [Neurodiverse voices: Opening Doors to Employment](#), p18

⁴² Bar Council, [Disability inclusion: Neurodiversity at the Bar \(recording\)](#)

⁴³ ACAS, [Neurodiversity at work: Talking about neurodiversity](#)

Early disclosure should always be encouraged. To achieve this, you should:⁴⁴

- Have a clear, transparent and consistent process for making a disclosure or request for a reasonable adjustment, including for neurodiversity
- Make sure the process is accommodating and accessible
- Ensure members, pupils, employees and applicants are aware of the process
- Apply a consistent approach when any individual makes a request
- Be responsive and take a proactive approach

Reasonable adjustments

Any decisions that are made because of disclosure should be easy to explain, irrespective of whether it is a 'yes' or a 'no' decision. An outright 'no' will seldom be appropriate without a collaborative process to explore what alternate adjustments might be granted. See our [Reasonable adjustments guide](#).

Remember: not all people with the same or similar type of neurodiversity will require the same adjustments.⁴⁵ Adjustments that suit one person might not help someone else with the same condition.⁴⁶

Tips to assist conversations about neurodiversity:

1. Do not to assume common thinking; it might be that you have to clarify unwritten rules and social expectations.⁴⁷
2. Consider any support network that chambers might offer to their barristers, pupils and staff. Someone who is neurodivergent might need additional support, for example, by having someone as a fixed point of contact or a buddy.⁴⁸

Recruitment

Sadly, many who disclose their neurodiversity during the recruitment process come to regret it, so it is important to try to improve systems and processes.⁴⁹

When someone applies for pupillage, tenancy etc and advises they are

⁴⁴ Bar Council, [Disability inclusion: Neurodiversity at the Bar \(recording\)](#).

⁴⁵ Law Society, [Reasonable adjustments in organisations – guidance for best practice](#)

⁴⁶ ACAS, [Reasonable adjustments at work: Adjustments for neurodiversity](#)

⁴⁷ Bar Council, [Disability inclusion: Neurodiversity at the Bar \(recording\)](#)

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ AchieveAbility, [Neurodiverse voices: Opening Doors to Employment](#), p18

neurodivergent, chambers must consider reasonable adjustments (the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 apply to the entirety of a recruitment process).

Different reasonable adjustments may need to be made to each stage of the process. It is important to plan to make adjustments in advance so that they can be easily considered rather than trying to implement them mid-process. It's also worth recognising that many of these adjustments will improve your recruitment process generally – for both neurodivergent and neurotypical applicants.

Application forms: Ensure your application form is well formatted with a clear explanation of skills and experiences which are essential and those that are only desirable for the role.⁵⁰ With respect to reasonable adjustments, try to ensure forms are compatible with assistive technology.⁵¹ Instructions or guidance notes on how to complete the application form and what, if any, supporting documentation is required should be written in clear and direct language.

Inclusive interviewing: A major barrier to neurodivergent applicants is non-inclusive interviews. These may be interviews that focus on an individual's conversation and social skills and their body language – areas where neurodiversity may mean an applicant presents differently.⁵²

Tips for inclusive interviews:

- Provide clear directions to the interview, including photographs of streets and the closest public transportation station
- Provide clear instructions on how to access the building and where an applicant needs to go on arrival
- Allow adequate time for replies during the interview
- Let applicants know the name and role of anyone they'll be meeting during the interview beforehand
- Provide a timetable for the interview. For example: 'we'll spend the first 10 minutes talking about you, then spend 10 minutes talking about your technical experience'
- If possible, provide access to a quiet space where your candidate can avoid over sensory stimulation before and after the interview (if required)
- Where possible consider the environment (neurodiversity can mean applicants can be distracted by noise, lights, and the surrounding environment)

When you are being asked to consider reasonable adjustments, it is entirely acceptable

⁵⁰ ACAS, [Neurodiversity at work: Making your organisation neuroinclusive](#)

⁵¹ Genuis Within, [Neuro-inclusive recruitment](#)

⁵² Ibid

to consider the role someone is applying for. If a reasonable adjustment that is required for interview could not be provided in the job role, then it is not a reasonable adjustment.

In considering a reasonable adjustment for pupillage, you would need to consider practice area.⁵³ Practice areas predominantly involving paperwork in chambers require different attributes to those where much of the work is attending hearings, often at short notice and with travel across the country. If a general rather than a specialist pupillage is on offer, then it will be necessary to consider whether the areas of work can be limited as a reasonable adjustment.

Carefully consider any role for which you are recruiting. If specific skills are required for this role (eg practice area), then make this clear in any advertisement. But do recognise you might have to justify any specific skill that you require or intend to test in interview and pupillage.

Please note: Do not agree to reasonable adjustments and then fail to communicate these to the interview panel or others involved in the recruitment process where they have a need to know the reasonable adjustment for it to be effective (this should be the only reason for communicating reasonable adjustment to anyone within chambers). If adjustments have been agreed with a candidate and then they fail to materialise, this may interfere with the candidate's performance at interview and may amount to discrimination.

Any questions or discussions about a person's neurodivergence including necessary reasonable adjustments they may need as a pupil/in practice, should not take place:

- During an interview, unless the panel become concerned that there may be a previously unidentified need for a reasonable adjustment
- At any stage before an offer of pupillage is made

Reasonable adjustments can be considered once the offer is made. For more information, see our [Fair recruitment and selection guide](#).⁵⁴

Pupillage interviews: FAQs

1. Do I need to share interview questions in advance? And if so, how long in advance is reasonable?

⁵³ Tax work is probably the most obvious example of work where court appearances are very rare. Many forms of commercial work have lengthy periods of paperwork, but that can be in preparation for lengthy hearings. The frequency and duration of court work in other civil areas will vary, and in many areas, it will be possible to limit instructions so as to maintain a largely advisory/paper-based practice. Family and crime are at the other end of the scale, where much of the work is attending hearings, often at short notice and with travel across the country.

⁵⁴ Bar Council, [Fair recruitment and selection training](#)

No, you do not need to share full interview questions in advance. Although it may be appropriate to provide some additional information for **some** neurodivergent candidates. Consider providing partial questions or themes in advance for all candidates to avoid singling out disabled people or providing full questions in advance for disabled applicants. Material should be provided at a minimum 48 hours in advance and ideally 3-5 days ahead

2. Should I allow the use of reminder notes?

It is inclusive to allow candidates to bring brief notes or prompts. You may wish to set parameters, for example, limiting notes to one page of A4.

3. Do I need to provide applicants with the opportunity to move around or have short breaks if they cannot sit still for long periods?

Yes, movement breaks should be allowed for those who need them.

4. Can I mark down an applicant that fails to make eye contact?

Some neurodivergent candidates may find making eye contact difficult or uncomfortable. Marking down a candidate for this behaviour where it is not strictly necessary that they are able to demonstrate it could be considered discrimination.

5. I have been asked to reconsider the questions we ask for example to avoid open-ended and hypothetical questions. I've also been told to ask focused not generalised questions. Is this reasonable?

Chambers should consider and adapt interview questions and use a number of different question styles (again, consider the style of question an individual might need to respond to in the course of their work as a rule of thumb for question style – see also below). Chambers should also consider multiple formats for candidates to demonstrate skills (eg written test, mock hearing, presentation on legal topic).

6. I have been asked to avoid long questions containing multiple clauses which I understand can be a challenge for someone with difficulty focusing and waiting for a question to end, especially if they struggle with processing information. Is this reasonable?

Where there is a genuine occupational requirement for the candidate to be able to process such questions in conditions similar to interview, then it may be reasonable to test applicants at interview in this way. However, chambers should consider whether that genuinely is the case and ensure that the demands placed at interview are consistent with those in chambers areas of practice. For example, although it is often said barristers need to 'think on their feet', in reality, even in high-pressure hearings, the court timetable permits structured pauses, opportunities for quiet reflection and time to review work.

7. How much additional time should I allow for written tasks at interview?

What is 'reasonable' depends on the individual's needs and the job. For timed assessments, common extra time might be 15%, 25%, 30%, 33%, 40%, or 50% more time than standard. Extra time addresses slower processing, allowing candidates to show skills, not just speed, as workplace tasks rarely have extreme time limits.

8. **My pupil/new tenant has requested no short-notice instructions (eg when a solicitor sends a brief at 5pm for the following day) as a reasonable adjustment. Eleventh hour briefs are a common practice in crime. How should I respond?**

Any refusal by chambers to make a reasonable adjustment on the basis that the request is not reasonable must be based on a properly informed conversation. Chambers should also consider whether there are other steps that could reasonably be taken to address the disadvantage caused by short-notice work. For example, could chambers encourage clients to send 'core papers' ahead of time, or could offer fee incentives to clients to send papers early. Chambers should avoid a culture that celebrates unsafe practices as heroic and give support when they decline unsafe briefs.

Supporting and managing a pupil who is neurodivergent

If your pupil has disclosed that they are neurodivergent, it is important to develop a clear support plan at the earliest stage. This should happen before they start their pupillage, if at all possible, to ensure that they have access to support right from the outset. You need to monitor that any support agreed is properly provided throughout their pupillage.

The pupil should be involved in any discussion over reasonable adjustments as they will have the best understanding of their needs.⁵⁵ Your discussions should focus on the specific differences in the pupil's approach to work, and how you could support them.⁵⁶

However, your pupil might not know what support they need, this could be because they have been recently diagnosed or have never been provided sufficient support before. It is important, therefore, that you work together to establish and understand the appropriate adjustments.⁵⁷ You may need to consider assistance via an occupational health report or a GP to determine what is required.⁵⁸

Not everyone will require adjustments, and it should be noted that most adjustments are inexpensive or carry no financial costs for chambers/their employer. Each individual is different, and reasonable adjustments should be made on the basis of the individual's own understanding of their needs and/or an assessment by an

⁵⁵ Bar Council, [Disability inclusion: Neurodiversity at the Bar \(recording\)](#)

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ ACAS, [Reasonable adjustments at work: Adjustments for neurodiversity](#)

⁵⁸ Ibid

appropriately qualified person.

A pupil, barrister or staff member can get support through [Access to Work](#). This scheme is open to people with a disability who are in work (and also to help with interviews when applying for work). The scheme gives advice and information to individuals and chambers/employers. It can give a grant to support with:

- Specialist equipment and assistive software
- Physical changes to a workplace

This application might include a workplace assessment. Bear in mind any application through Access to Work will take time to process so an early application and therefore early disclosure is important.

For more details, please see [our guide on access to work](#)

Supporting your pupil(s): FAQs

1. How much extra support is reasonable when someone is failing to meet deadlines?

This will depend on the individual and circumstances. Possible adjustments might include extended deadlines, clearer instructions or structured supervision. It is helpful to have regular reviews and honest feedback, recorded in writing so that any issues are identified and addressed.

2. How do I ensure that when other members are assessing my pupil, they don't mark them down for a disability they may not know about?

Consider whether it is appropriate (always with the pupil's consent) to share relevant information of any reasonable adjustments needed. It is also prudent for supervisors or the pupillage committee to oversee the assessment process and scores, to ensure that disabilities are duly taken into account.

3. Does chambers have to pay for additional software for pupils?

It may be a reasonable adjustment to provide and fund software for pupils as well as staff/employees, eg dictation or screen readers. The question is always what is reasonable in the circumstances, and factors to balance may include: how helpful the software will be in reducing the disadvantage, how much it costs, and whether the software could be used by others or by future pupils.

4. My pupil wants to work from home, I believe they should be in chambers, is this reasonable?

This depends on weighing the reason for being in chambers against the pupil's reason for asking for the adjustment and should be assessed in discussion with the

pupil on a case-by-case basis. It is often reasonable to allow a pupil to work from home at least some of the time, even where it is beneficial to their pupillage to also be in chambers from time to time.

5. My pupil is struggling with oral advocacy despite this being a significant part of the role and assessment. What do I do?

First assess and consider why they are struggling. Provide targeted support as appropriate, for example a practice hearing, feedback, external training. If there is a link to disability, ensure reasonable adjustments are made, eg extra prep time or use of notes. However, if, despite support, they can't meet the required standard, then document this clearly and fairly in the assessment.

6. My pupil is struggling with changing plans. They are asking for more notice. How do I manage this?

Give as much notice as possible and use consistent routines. Where changes are unavoidable, explain clearly and allow adjustment time.

7. A couple of members of chambers have commented that my pupil is very rude to them. What should I do?

This should be addressed promptly and fairly. Speak to the pupil and describe the behaviour causing concern. Ask for their perspective. If the pupil is open about their neurodiversity, remind members of chambers that neurodivergent individuals may struggle with tone, eye contact and communication. Offer to coach the pupil on professional communication and keep records of both the feedback and your response.

8. Clients have given negative feedback about my neurodivergent pupil. What can I do?

As above, assess the nature of the feedback, ask the pupil for their response. Provide constructive feedback and offer coaching as appropriate. Where appropriate, advocate to clients for inclusion and awareness of neurodiversity.

9. Our neurodivergent pupil/junior tenant has asked not to be sent to courts outside London. Is this reasonable?

If the individual is disabled, this is a request for a reasonable adjustment and must be properly considered. Engage in dialogue, request permission to see relevant medical records and consider whether this limitation should be granted or if considering refusing it, then what flexibility can be offered. Consider whether they could travel with advance notice, or whether some destinations or distances may be workable. Consider how travel work can be fairly distributed in chambers, as there may be others (eg parents of younger children) who also struggle with travel.

Information for tenants, pupils and aspiring barristers

We'd encourage aspiring barristers, pupils and tenants to look at the excellent [resource library](#) provided by [Neurodiversity in Law](#), in particular:

- Tips for Bar students
- Tips for prospective pupils
- Sharing your neurodivergence

Disclosure

It's entirely up to you to make any decision to disclose, and we appreciate that you may worry that disclosure could harm your career.

It won't surprise you to know that for many barristers, aspects of their neurodiversity has enabled them to build hugely successful careers.

We do however encourage disclosure so that your pupillage supervisor, clerks and chambers/employer can assist. If you don't disclose, chambers/your employer won't be aware of your need for reasonable adjustments/need for specific support in key areas.

We'd encourage disclosure as soon as possible, preferably before your pupillage begins. This will enable you to work with your chambers/employer to agree what support you will need.

The same applies for any tenant joining chambers/or employed barrister joining their new organisation.

What support you should expect

Pupils or tenants who disclose their disability can expect their prospective chambers to engage with them in advance of starting pupillage in order to discuss what reasonable adjustments they may need. As part of this process, any disability committee and/or the Equality and Diversity Officer (EDO) in chambers may be engaged and they may contact our [Disability Panel or Equality, Diversity and Social Mobility Committee](#) for advice. You can also contact the EDO or the Bar Council directly.

What you can do

Remember that everything discussed above should involve collaboration and reciprocity. You have responsibility to develop your own sustainable professional strategies, and professional autonomy. Your chambers won't always know what support you need or want so you may have to be proactive about asking for it.

Support groups/sources of information

- [Neurodiversity in Law](#): a charity committed to raising awareness, providing support, and reducing the stigma associated with neurodivergence within the legal. Contact via email: info@neurodiversityinlaw.co.uk
- [Genius Within](#): UK provider of neurodiversity services for business, non-commercial organisations and individuals.
- [Birkbeck Centre for neurodiversity at work](#)
- [ACAS](#): provides impartial advice on workplace rights, rules and best practice
- [CIPD neuro-inclusion at work guide](#): guide for those who want to learn more about neurodiversity, the benefits of having a neuroinclusive and fair organisation, and how they can support neurodivergent people at work
- [National Autistic Society](#): its advice and guidance section has a wide range of information about autism
- [AADD-UK](#): a site for and by adults with ADHD
- [Dyscalculia Information Centre](#): provides a range of information on dyscalculia
- [British Dyslexia Association](#): the voice of dyslexic people since 1972