 

**ASCETS**

**SHEFFIELD**

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| **An Introduction to Neuro-Affirmative Language** |
| **Introduction** |
| **What is neuro-affirmative language?**Neuro-affirmative language acknowledges a person’s strengths, interests, and differences in a positive way. It reflects a strengths-based approach to difference. The use of different terminology varies over time as society changes. **Key terms*** **Neurodiverse/neurodiversity** describes the natural variation of human brains within the population.
* **Neurodivergent/neurodivergence**: people whose brains have developed significantly differently from the typical brain (for example, autistic, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia).
* **Essentially, we are all neurodiverse, some are neurodivergent.**
* **Autistic person /Allistic person (non-autistic person)**

**Why is it important to use neuro affirmative language?** It promotes understanding, celebrates difference, and empowers the neurodivergent community. Moves away from deficit, overly, medicalised language* **Social rather than medical model**

The social model removes the focus of need to be within the CYP and encourages instead to change wider factors such as the environment, relationships and the curriculum.* **Promote a strengths-based approach**

The choice of language we use can reinforce a CYPs positive qualities, capabilities, and identities. Neuro-affirmative language counteracts the tendency to focus on CYP needs and challenges (a deficit view) and to label them with a negative reputation.* **Respecting the individual**

It is important to recognise that we are all unique. A person’s neurotype (and other factors such as their gender, occupation, or age) contributes to their individual identity. Using identity-first rather than person-first language recognises the whole, unique person: for example, we may use the term ‘autistic’ rather than ‘a person with autism’, but this is dependent upon the CYPs preferences. * **Person centred approach**

Presents the CYP in a way in which they and their family would like them to be seen. The use of negative language can lead to CYP attempting to hide or camouflage their identity, [masking](https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/autistic-masking), and can result in anxiety.* **Promotes self-esteem and wellbeing**

Foster motivation and resilience and promote more effective personal development and progress.**Use neuro-affirmative language when communicating with, about and around CYP.** |
| **Examples** |
| How do you feel about each of the young people below?What impression would a new member of staff have of that young person?How would a parent feel reading or hearing this about their child?How would each of the young people feel about themselves? |
| **Examples of how language can be referred or ‘flipped’ to be neuro-affirmative**  |
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| ***Commonly used***  | ***Affirming***  |
| **Difficulties with …..****‘Struggles to…’** | Differences in … Requires support with/from to…Areas of challenge are…. |
| **Overwhelmed****Meltdowns** | Triggers to high anxiety are …. resulting in …. |
| **Restricted interest/hobbies**  | Focused / intense / specialist /passionate interests in …..Areas of expertise in …. |
| **Dramatic****Easily upset** | Expressive/ passionate/ animated facial expressions to communicate emotions Sensitive when……Hyper-empathetic when…… |
| **Disorganised****Messy** | Requires support with planning and organising (what/when?),  |
| **Attention seeking** | Seeks connection…. Seeks a familiar response …Communicates need …. |
| **Following their own agenda** | Autonomous Focused interests Quickly forget or lose interest in things they are no longer focusing on. |
| **Defiant** | Anxiety driven demand avoidance. DistressedDysregulated when…. Anxious when…Holds strong beliefs. Determined.Advocates for a different perspective.May be overwhelmed by environmental demands of …… |

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| **Resources and Links** |
| Beth Wilson: [Identity First Language – Beth Wilson – Artist (doodlebeth.com)](https://doodlebeth.com/identity-first-language/)Neuroclastic:[Person-First Language: What It Is, and When Not To Use It](https://neuroclastic.com/person-first/)Neurodiversity information hub: [What is neurodiversity? - MindMate](https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/what-is-nd/)Reframing Autism: [Celebrating & nurturing Autistic identity](https://reframingautism.org.au/)[Language of Autism Project: Short film (with subtitles) - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F03Dwp5YWw8)Neuro-affirmative [Language](https://www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/media/cqkliim4/the-neuroaffirmative-language-guide-002.pdf) Guide |
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