

A guide to providing Ongoing Support

Providing effective Ongoing Support for neurodivergent employees



What is ongoing support?

Ongoing support for employees is a continuous approach that ensures a workplace culture where all team members, including those that are neurodivergent, feel safe, valued, and empowered at work.

The importance of ongoing support

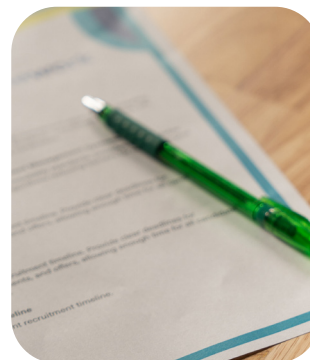
Providing ongoing support is important for all employees but is especially important for neurodivergent employees to ensure they feel valued and understood on an ongoing basis.

An neurodivergent employee shared,

“Ongoing support is so important, I feel like sometimes even when an organisation does the initial inclusiveness, the long-term support doesn't exist. It's like they forgot I have a disability and needs that are ongoing and don't end because I seem like I'm ok or coping.”

Providing neuro-inclusive Ongoing Support Tip sheet

Use this tip sheet to ensure that your ongoing support initiatives are supportive of neurodivergent employees allowing them to do their best in the workplace.



Learn more and access resources

To learn more about Neuro-inclusive Recruiting and how to create and maintain neuro-inclusive workplaces, scan the QR code or visit neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au.



Creating psychologically safe environments



Psychologically safe environments

Creating a psychologically safe workplace fosters an open, inclusive culture, supporting employees to feel comfortable sharing their ideas, concerns, and feedback without fearing negative consequences. Psychological safety ensures it's safe to speak up, ask for help, and admit mistakes.

Tips for creating Psychologically safe environments

1. Clear communication

Ensure transparent communication to keep everyone informed and aligned.

2. Encourage inclusivity

Foster a culture where all voices are heard and valued.

3. Value and belonging

Make every employee feel valued and that they belong.

4. Foster accountability

Embrace accountability by acknowledging and learning from errors.

5. Support recognition

Provide ongoing support and recognise each contribution.



Effectively using check-ins

Check-ins

Effective, regular check-ins are essential in supporting employees and strengthening relationships between employees and managers. This approach boosts performance, engagement, and well-being while ensuring timely problem resolution.



Tips for creating effective check-ins

1. Clear communication channels for immediate feedback

Ensure effective communication that accommodates different styles and preferences for open dialogue and feedback.

2. Support continuous personal and professional growth

Focus on individual progress and development to foster a culture of learning and advancement.

3. Building trust between employees and managers

Develop trust between employees and senior staff to promote a supportive environment.

4. Tailoring support to neurodivergent employees' needs

Provide support tailored to the unique needs of neurodivergent employees.

5. Addressing issues early to avoid escalation

Identify and address challenges early to prevent escalation.

6. Reinforce inclusion

Make every team member feel valued and included, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion.

A neurodivergent employee shared,



“Routine check-ins every week or month would be highly beneficial. Establishing this regularity helps neurodivergent employees manage their expectations and prioritise discussions with managers, leading to more effective communication. It can also help senior staff identify and address performance issues early, preventing them from escalating.”



Giving constructive feedback

Giving feedback

To be an effective manager, mastering the art of delivering both praise and constructive criticism is essential. While praise uplifts and motivates, constructive feedback helps guide employees towards improvement. However, delivering criticism can be challenging and uncomfortable, making it crucial for managers to handle feedback with care.

Tips for giving constructive feedback

1. Be clear and direct

Use straightforward, literal language that avoids metaphors and idioms.

For example, instead of saying, "We need to hit the ground running on this project," say, "Let's start the project immediately and complete the first draft by Friday."

2. Avoid unnecessary criticism

Consider whether pointing out minor, non-recurring errors is beneficial.

3. Purposeful feedback

Aim to enhance performance rather than express frustration.

4. Focus on what to do, opposed to what not to do

Frame feedback to focus on improvement and learning.

5. Privacy is key

Give feedback in private to avoid embarrassment.

6. Be supportive

Maintain a supportive and respectful atmosphere.

W

Prepare for emotional responses

7. Approach feedback with empathy and readiness for emotional responses.

Timeliness

8. Offer feedback soon after the event for greater impact.

Encourage dialogue

9. Allow employees to ask questions and suggest solutions.

Focus on behaviour, not personality

10. Address behaviours, not personalities.

Follow up

11. Continue the dialogue and acknowledge improvements.

Providing support as a leader



Leadership support

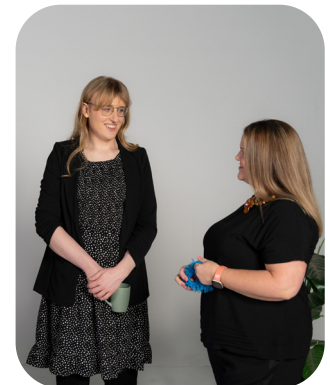
Leadership support encompasses several key practices that contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive workplace.

Tips for leadership support

- 1. Task assistance and goal setting**
Help set work tasks and establish clear, achievable goals.
- 2. Clear reporting structure**
Have clear processes on who to report to and where to escalate issues.
- 3. Open information sharing**
Ensure necessary information is accessible to everyone.
- 4. Training and development opportunities**
Offer ongoing training and development opportunities.
- 5. Constructive feedback**
Provide regular, supportive feedback during performance reviews.
- 6. Workload management**
Manage workloads to prevent burnout and ensure balance.



Providing effective support as a leader can help employees do their best at work.



A neurodivergent employee shared,

“Constructive feedback is key! If it's balanced with positive feedback and offers an alternative approach, I'm more than happy to adjust my work practices. I'm always open to improving and appreciate feedback that helps me grow.”



Supporting employees through workplace changes

Providing support through workplace changes

Changes such as restructuring, relocations, and smaller adjustments like furniture being rearranged or fire drills can cause employees to feel anxious, impacting morale and productivity. Supporting employees during times of change is critical for maintaining a positive workplace, fostering resilience, and improving workplace retention. Effective change management plays a crucial role in this process by ensuring clear communication, providing support, and implementing strategies to help employees adapt to transitions smoothly.

Supporting employees through workplace changes ensures a smoother transition and helps maintain morale across the team.

A neurodivergent employee shared,

“Being a neurodivergent person, responding to change is always a challenge for me. But if I can be given as much information as possible ahead of time, that helps me feel less anxious about change in the workplace.”

Tips for providing support

- 1. Early and clear communication**
Start conversations early, providing clear details about changes.
For example, give neurodivergent employees a detailed fire drill outline, including timing and procedures, to help them prepare.
- 2. Collaborative planning**
Work with each team member to address their specific concerns and needs.
- 3. Continuous support and training**
Offer regular check-ins, tailored training, and mentorship.
- 4. Familiarisation and flexibility**
Help staff become familiar with new settings and maintain flexible work arrangements.
- 5. Feedback and professional support**
Encourage feedback and provide access to professional support services.
- 6. Recognition and inclusion**
Leverage the unique skills of each employee and involve the whole team in the transition process.



Providing additional support is key to working through workplace changes.



Promoting good mental health

Mental health in the workplace

Neurodivergent employees can contribute valuable perspectives and strengths to the workplace. To harness these benefits and create neuro-inclusive workplaces, organisations need to focus on supporting the mental health and well-being of all of their team members.



Tips for promoting good mental health

1. Encourage open conversations

Encourage sharing of work-related stress early to ensure issues can be addressed.

2. Flexibility of work arrangements

Offer flexible work arrangements to enable individuals to manage personal stress.

3. Cultivate a supportive team atmosphere

Foster a team culture of support and inclusion.

4. Accessible communication

Maintain an open-door policy for discussing issues to support employees to feel safe speaking up.

5. Handle concerns with sensitivity

Address concerns with empathy and discretion.

6. Observant leadership

Be attentive to behavioural changes indicating struggle.

7. Inclusive team building

Organise neuro-inclusive team building activities to ensure everyone feels included.

8. Peer support and mentoring

Establish opt-out peer support and mentoring systems.

9. Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

Provide access to EAP's for addressing work and personal issues.

A neurodivergent employee shared,



“I have learned through my own struggles with mental health the importance of having an environment that promotes well-being.”



Addressing bullying and harassment in the workplace



Bullying and harassment in the workplace

Workplace bullying is defined as persistent unfair treatment of an individual or group, which can jeopardise health and safety.

Neurodivergent employees might be more vulnerable to bullying due to misunderstandings or unawareness of their ways of processing and responding to situations. The consequences can be profound, potentially leading to stress, anxiety, depression, and in extreme cases, even suicide. Additionally, bullying harms team cohesion and impedes organisational goals, creating an environment that is toxic for all employees.

Addressing bullying, harassment, and other negative behaviours is essential to building a diverse, inclusive workplace where everyone, including neurodivergent employees, feels supported and safe.



Tips for addressing bullying and harassment in the workplace

1. Preventative strategies

Implement strategies to prevent bullying and harassment.

2. Immediate and effective response

Take swift and effective action when such behaviours are reported.

3. Positive and respectful workplace culture

Develop a workplace culture of positivity and respect.

4. Supportive reporting systems

Create safe, accessible channels for reporting and resolving issues to help employees speak up.



Fostering a respectful and safe workplace culture can prevent bullying and harassment.

A neurodivergent employee shared,



“In the past, when I disclosed that I was feeling bullied or harassed, I would have appreciated if someone could have believed me about my distress. It would have been nice for my manager to ask how I would like to proceed, or what I would like to be done on my behalf. Just having someone listen to me and discuss how I felt and how it was affecting me would have made me feel much more supported.”



Funding support for inclusive workplaces in Australia

Accessing funding support

In Australia, workplaces that employ individuals with neurodivergence and or disabilities may be able to access funding supports and incentives designed to help create inclusive and accessible environments. These funding programs can assist employers and employees, covering essential needs like workplace adjustments, specialised training, and more.

Key funding supports

- **Job Access**
Support for entering the workforce, changing jobs, and workplace adjustments.
- **Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)**
Financial aid for work-related modifications and services.
- **Work Assist**
Aid in retaining employees at risk due to illness, injury, or disability.
- **Disability Employment Services (DES)**
Help finding and retaining employees with disabilities.
- **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**
Fund employment-related supports.
- **Wage Subsidy Scheme and Supported Wage System (SWS)**
Leverage the unique skills of each employee and involve the whole team in the transition process.
- **Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE)**
Employment opportunities for specific projects.
- **Comcare**
Support for returning to work under the Commonwealth workers' compensation scheme.



Links to the funding supports can be found on the Neuro-inclusive Recruiting website.

Supporting neurodivergent employees during probation and exit processes

Probation and exit processes

Probation periods allow employers to assess an employee's fit for the role. It is particularly important to support neurodivergent employees during this phase, considering their unique contributions and needs to foster a fair and inclusive experience.

Tips for creating inclusive probation periods

1. Duration and flexibility

Flexible probation periods to accommodate neurodivergent employees' adjustment needs.

2. Sensitive termination practices

Handle terminations with sensitivity and adherence to legal standards.

3. Rights and entitlements

Ensure equal entitlements and rights from day one.

Tips for performance management during probation

1. Provide targeted support

Identify and address specific needs to facilitate a smooth transition into the workforce and foster positive performance outcomes.

2. Clear communication

Ensure that expectations and feedback are delivered in ways that are accessible and understandable.

3. Encourage open dialogue

Create a workplace environment where neurodivergent employees feel comfortable discussing their challenges and needs.

Tips for concluding the probation period

1. Provide targeted support

Conduct a supportive, open-ended meeting to discuss progress, considering their unique experiences.

2. Thoughtful decision-making

Identify an employee's specific circumstances, always aiming to support their success.

3. Legal and ethical adherence

Uphold legal and ethical obligations to all employees.

4. Preventing Discrimination

Make unbiased decisions regarding workforce retention.

Providing support during probation and exit processes

Tips on conducting a respectful exit process

1. Exit interview

Gather insights into improvements into the exit process.

2. Constructive feedback

Provide feedback on areas for growth while recognising the employee's strengths.

3. Resource provision

Provide resources on neurodiversity and workplace accommodations.

4. Positive references

Provide a neutral or positive reference that emphasises the employee's strengths relevant to different work environment.

5. Buddy program evaluation

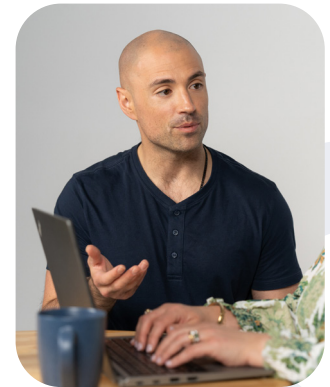
Assess the effectiveness of the buddy program.

6. Recognition and inclusion

Leverage the unique skills of each employee and involve the whole team in the transition process.



Providing additional support is key to working through workplace changes.



Explore future opportunities and resources

1. Stay in touch

Consider adding them to a talent pool for future opportunities that may align better with their strengths.

2. Community resources

Provide information on community resources or support networks.

Supporting retention of neurodivergent employees



Retention of neurodivergent employees

Retaining neurodivergent employees requires a supportive, inclusive environment that acknowledges the unique needs and values individual contributions. Research indicates that neurodivergent employees who feel valued and supported often stay longer than their neurotypical colleagues.

Tips for supporting retention

1. Inclusive workplace culture

Foster acceptance and diversity within the workplace.

2. Accommodations and support

Provide tailored accommodations and support to help employees do their best.

3. Training and awareness

Conduct neurodiversity awareness training to ensure managers have a level of understanding about neurodivergence.

4. Career development opportunities

Offer accessible career development and mentorship programs.

5. Feedback and recognition

Regularly recognise contributions and provide constructive feedback to ensure employees feel valued.

6. Work-life balance

Promote a healthy work-life balance through flexibility.

7. Community and support networks

Connect employees with support networks and communities to ensure they feel understood.



Supporting neurodivergent employees ensure they feel valued.

